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## Lilian Westcott Hale and Nancy Hale: From Victorian to Modern in Art and Text

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Lilian Westcott Hale and Nancy Hale:  
From Victorian to Modern in Art and Text

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy in Media, Art, and Text at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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## Acknowledgment

The completion of this dissertation expands Hale family research to include Nancy Hale's generation, and it is made possible through her own efforts to preserve information about her family of influential and absorbing personalities. I would like to thank the libraries which Hale selected to catalogue and preserve the extensive personal and professional writings of her long career. The archive librarians provided expert assistance in directing me to the resources I required in both The University of Virginia Special Collections and the Sophia Smith Collection at Smith College. I am particularly grateful to Maida Goodwin at Smith for sharing her knowledge of the extensive contents of the Hale family papers as well as her delightful insights into the remarkable family.

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This dissertation is dedicated to my family: my husband Tom Lind, my daughter Mary Clark Lind, and my sisters Janelle and Mary Welby. They gave love and comfort through the events which sadly provide the second part of my dedication: in loving memory of my father Mark Hardin, my mother Kitty Hardin, and my son Carter Lind. I know they would be proud of this accomplishment as would my grandmother, Nancy Hale.

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## List of Abbreviations

CW.....	Charles Wertenbaker
HFP.....	Hale Family Papers
LWH.....	Lilian Westcott Hale
NH.....	Nancy Hale
NHP.....	Nancy Hale Papers
PLH.....	Philip Leslie Hale
SSC.....	Sophia Smith Collection
TSH.....	Taylor Scott Hardin
WM.....	William Maxwell

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## Abstract

### LILIAN WESTCOTT HALE AND NANCY HALE: FROM VICTORIAN TO MODERN IN ART AND TEXT

By Norah Hardin Lind, Ph.D.

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2010

Major Director: Dr. Bryant Mangum, Professor of English

Lilian Westcott Hale (1880-1963) and her daughter Nancy Hale (1908-1988) built successful careers during a period of transition in America, as Victorian mores were replaced by new modern freedoms. Greater independence for women had evolved during the preceding century, before the influential cultural factors which occurred during the early twentieth century like urbanization and world war. This interdisciplinary analysis of Lilian Hale's artwork and Nancy Hale's writings demonstrates the imprint of the surrounding world on their work. Lilian Hale's art is influenced by her Victorian childhood, and Nancy Hale's fiction reveals many conflicts of the modern era. The study of these two women is enhanced by the wealth of primary documentation connecting their ideas and their lives to their artistic works.

Both of the women ranked among the most respected in their fields during their lifetimes. Their works resonate with elements of their eras, demonstrating what it was to be a woman during the first half of the twentieth century. Lilian Westcott Hale and Nancy Hale both engage the gender constructs of their periods through their work. Lilian Westcott Hale's art is divided here into three distinct genres: her still lifes and landscapes express the confining

environment the Victorian woman occupied; her idealized women reflect the period's taste for female perfection and beauty; her portraits and figure studies point to Hale's own distinction between males and females through their clothing and their poses. Unlike Lilian Westcott Hale, Nancy Hale demonstrates woman's new freedoms in an open manner, a result of the break with Victorianism. Hale's use of a literary medium allows her direct examination of the turmoil caused by the modern breakdown of Victorian structures.

Lilian Westcott Hale refrains from harsh judgment of her daughter's world, while Nancy Hale's modern challenge of the previous era's standards leads her into troubling relationships and difficulties balancing her career with her personal life. Their work reveals the cultural ideologies of their respective eras and particularly the changes taking place for women.

## Part 1: The Artistic Contribution of Two Women

The following examination of the artworks of Lilian Westcott Hale (1880-1963) and the writings of her daughter, Nancy Hale (1908-1988), offers a glimpse at the effects of the confining American social structure on women at the beginning of the century, as well as the ensuing changes toward greater freedom for women that also brought turmoil. Working within changing cultural conventions, Lilian and Nancy Hale expressed the mood of their times in two media forms. Biographical information places the two women in history, but it is their work that records their reactions and feelings through descriptive detail. Lilian Westcott Hale's art is exhibited in museums and private collections, and Nancy Hale's writings are available in published books and journals. Both women were acknowledged during their lifetimes for contributions to the arts. Lilian Hale is included in surveys and broad discussions, but the scholarship on Nancy Hale's efforts is scant. This dissertation will examine the cultural significance of their work, looking at their separate perspectives for the first time, together.

The major sources for material related to Lilian and Nancy Hale, beyond the art that they produced, are the many primary documents archived in scholarly and private libraries. The Hale family's historical significance has led to the cataloguing of several generations of the family's papers at Smith College in the Sophia Smith Collection. A separate collection in the same library is devoted exclusively to Nancy Hale's Papers, including correspondence and artifacts.<sup>1</sup> The Sophia Smith Collection is the oldest repository for women's studies in the country, an appropriate resource since the focus here will continually return to the mother and the daughter as women artists. The Special Collections Department at the University of Virginia in

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<sup>1</sup> The Hale family papers cover 61.75 linear feet, and the Nancy Hale Papers fill 33 additional linear feet of shelf space.



Charlottesville, where Nancy Hale lived for more than a half century, contains her manuscripts of both published and unpublished work. This collection contributed to the bibliographical listing of Hale's written works, which anticipated this dissertation and which forms an attachment to this document. The University of Virginia's Special Collections also contains limited correspondence files, notably the letters of Elizabeth Nowell, Hale's agent and friend.

Despite both the extensive preservation of primary materials relating to Nancy Hale and her stature in literary circles during her lifetime, secondary source materials consist only of such brief items as news clippings and entries in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*. She receives no attention in discussions of literature of her period. She is mentioned in such compilations as the letters of Maxwell Perkins, her editor at Scribner's. Despite her prodigious publishing record with *The New Yorker* and her many close friendships within the publication's staff, Nancy Hale's name is not included in Brendan Gill's index to his 1975 book *Here at the New Yorker*. Ben Yagoda's 2001 history of the magazine entitled *About Town: The New Yorker and the World It Made*<sup>2</sup> makes several mentions of Hale, one of them negative.

Lilian Hale has elicited more scholarly analysis than her daughter, which may be due to the significant concern of feminist art historians during the past forty years with renewing interest in forgotten women artists. Lilian Hale's shows and awards are discussed in journal, and her work is included in several art historical surveys. She is the subject of one dissertation by

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<sup>2</sup> Yagoda references two notes from editor William Maxwell to Hale. The first requests a stylistic alteration to her writing, and in the second Maxwell comments, "Whenever I read anything of yours, in manuscript here, or at the dentist's, I am convinced against a mountain of evidence to the contrary that there is such a thing as the human heart" (Maxwell to Hale, 16 May 1941, 149). Later Yagoda calls Hale's story "Midsummer" "lyrical if somewhat overwrought" (160). That story will be discussed in depth here, with consideration for the high esteem in which it was held at *The New Yorker*.

Erica Hirshler (1992). Bernice Kramer Leader also includes Hale in her 1980 dissertation at Columbia University, "The Boston Lady as a Work of Art: Paintings by the Boston School at the Turn of the Century." Leader makes repeated mention of Lilian Hale and devotes an entire section to Philip Hale (1865-1931), her husband, who was an artist and an art instructor, as well as an art critic and an art historian. Only two of Lilian Hale's pictures are used as illustrations, but Leader analyzes the idealized images of women produced in Boston in the years around the turn of the century, images which will form a substantial section of this discussion of Lilian Hale's work. Of more significance to this study than specific references to Lilian Hale's work is Leader's attention to the types of artwork being produced in Boston at the time that Hale began her career, and her description of the conservative realism of the city's artistic approach. As will be discussed in a later chapter, the Boston school of painters was a recognized force entering the twentieth century. In the early years of the century critical opinion of the group shifted. Instead of retaining recognition as the most academically trained artists in America, steeped in the European traditions that the instructors had acquired, the Boston artists began to be faulted as stale and resistant to change.

Two works published in 1986 place Lilian Hale in the context of Boston artists during the same time period. Trevor Fairbrother's exhibition catalogue *The Bostonians: Painters of an Elegant Age, 1870-1930*, provides examples of the work of all three of the Hale family artists practicing in Boston at the time: Philip Leslie Hale, his sister, Ellen Day Hale, and Lilian Westcott Hale. Fairbrother's work is introduced by pertinent essays which provide the background for what the exhibition's director Jan Fontein calls in the Preface "our city's favorite group of painters, the Boston school at the turn of the century" (ix). The three Hale painters are

represented in biographies by Erica Hirshler (209-211) at the end of Fairbrother's catalogue, as well as through examples of their art.

In the same year, 1986, R.H. Ives Gammell's work *The Boston Painters 1900-1930* was published posthumously under the editorial guidance of his goddaughter, Elizabeth Hunter. Gammell, a critic and an artist, frequently wrote articles about Lilian Hale's abilities as both a draftsman and a painter. One of her drawings, *Celia's Bower*, provides the frontispiece for Gammell's text. He devotes a chapter to each of the key instructors who shaped the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, during the first three decades of the twentieth century; however, his chapter about the instructor Philip Hale includes, even in the title, the name of his wife, Lilian Hale.<sup>3</sup> Many prominent women artists of Boston are covered in Gammell's work, but Lilian Hale is the only one to share billing with her husband. Elizabeth Oakey Paxton, by contrast, was a significant painter whose husband occupies a chapter to himself. This may be because, as Gammell says, "Mrs. Paxton's work has remained relatively unknown because her wares usually attracted purchasers immediately" (168), but a more likely cause for the difference in treatment of the two women is his admiration for Lilian Hale's skills. He begins the chapter devoted to the Hales with praise: "The remarkable couple who form the subject of this chapter present a phenomenon unparalleled in the history of painting" (123). While he admires Philip Hale's perspicacity, claiming that "Philip Hale and William Paxton were alone among the Boston

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<sup>3</sup> The chapter's title is "Philip L. Hale, A.N.A. 1865-1931; Lilian Westcott Hale, N.A. 1881-1963," following Gammell's format for other chapters which also list the artists' names, National Academy affiliation, and dates. Of the six instructors covered, four are ranked academicians (N.A.) by the National Academy, one artist is unranked, and Philip Hale is ranked as an Associate at the National Academy (A.N.A.). Lilian Westcott Hale is the only woman also mentioned in a chapter title, and her N.A. rank positions her as the equal of the highest male instructors, above her husband. The birth date Gammell uses for Hale, unlike the commonly used date of 1880, was a surprise to Lilian Hale when she found it on her birth certificate while applying for a passport in her later years.

Painters in approaching their art analytically from a broad intellectual base” (125), he focuses more on Philip Hale’s critiques of art than on his artwork. On the subject of Philip Hale’s critical expertise, Leader provides the following comment from an interview with Nancy Hale about her parents: “Sir Kenneth Clark observed to their daughter, ‘Hers are the work of a natural painter; his are the work of a critic’” (125). On 10 January 1974, Ives Gammell reassured Nancy Hale about Clark’s comment, saying:

Lord Clark erred in calling your father a critic’s painter. He was no such thing. Philip Hale was that very rare but immensely valuable contributor to art history, a painter’s critic, a man with a painter’s eye who knows the how and why of picture making and can write about it. This is precisely what the honorable lord is not. Very knowledgeable about Civilization, painting eludes him. Whenever I read his beautifully worded lucubrations I think how Hale would have demolished them with devastating sarcasm as he shattered poor Royal Cortissoz, unwisely but with justification.<sup>4</sup> (SSC, NHP, 13.7)

Lilian Hale’s artwork is the subject of Gammell’s extensive praise and analysis, but despite his rejection of Clark’s comments, he also finds fault with Philip Hale’s paintings. In describing Philip Hale’s work and his contribution to his wife’s oeuvre, Gammell notes:

Some subtle flaw, difficult to pinpoint, in the initial concept of his picture was all too frequently compounded by injudicious choices and decisions made in the course of its execution. An alert observer can usually discover minor felicities

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<sup>4</sup> Gammell refers to one of Hale’s essays discussed in *The Boston Painters 1900-1930* (129-130). Philip Hale was often critically incautious in his reviews.

scattered throughout each canvas but the total effect is rarely wholly pleasing or convincing. His paintings enjoyed very moderate success in his lifetime and they are not likely to be regarded as more than period curiosities in the future.<sup>5</sup> But his painterly thinking was extremely penetrating and sufficed to give a coherence to his wife's exquisite perceptivity which she might not have achieved by herself.

(124)

A number of letters from Gammell to Lilian Hale in the files of the Sophia Smith Collection at Smith College indicate both his tremendous admiration and the possibility of bias in his extravagant praise of her artwork. He writes in response to Nancy Hale on 10 January 1974, expressing his opinions about both of her parents' abilities:

I am quite sure you are right about his [Philip Hale's] having felt cruelly frustrated and saddened by his failure as a painter. I believe this failure also accounted for his defensive attitude towards his pupils. He was happiest with the docile ones who never asked questions and so he really only succeeded in developing talented girls who petered out soon after they lost his guidance. His failure as a painter, despite his great intelligence, tremendous industry and total dedication defies analysis. Some element indispensable to the picture-maker was absent. Your mother had it in abundance and drew on it intuitively, I think, for I do not believe she was analytical. He provided the analyses for her and the results of their collaboration were extraordinary. I saw your mother only briefly and occasionally, years later. I am happy to remember that I had the opportunity to tell

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<sup>5</sup> Gammell is incorrect in his assessment of Philip Hale's future. Philip Hale's paintings, particularly his highly impressionistic *plein air* pieces, are sought after, commanding impressive prices at auction.

her that I placed her among the half dozen greatest painters of children in the history of art. She received the statement with incredulous indifference as a rather tiresome hyperbole from a well intentioned nitwit. Of course, she may have been right. Nevertheless, for what it is worth, I proclaim it from the housetops, backing my opinion with a reasoned critique, confident that if there are ever again painters in this deteriorating world they will back me up in my opinion. (SSC, NHP, 13.7)

Gammell demonstrates his strong preference for the Boston School of which he was a member, first as a student, then as an artist. His praise of the academic technique of that group reaches its highest level in the discussion of the art of Lilian Westcott Hale.

The most significant scholarly work to date about Lilian Westcott Hale is the 1992 dissertation by Erica Eve Hirshler, *Lilian Westcott Hale (1880-1963): A Woman Painter of the Boston School*. Hirshler, who is now curator of American Art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, benefited from conversations with Nancy Hale about her parents during her research. Hirshler's dissertation provides a biography of Lilian Westcott Hale, contextualizing her life and work as an integral part of the Boston conservative tradition. The useful checklist of Hale's artwork accompanying the dissertation provides chronological information about the specific works Lilian Hale completed. Hirshler has revisited Lilian Hale's accomplishments in briefer forms in the years since her dissertation was written.<sup>6</sup>

Kirsten Swinth's 2001 study, *Painting Professionals: Women Artists & the Development of Modern American Art, 1870-1930*, includes a discussion of Lilian Hale in her role as a professional artist. In describing Hale's relationships with her sister-in-law and her husband,

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<sup>6</sup> See Hirshler's exhibition catalogue "*Drawn with Butterfly's Wings*": *The Art of Lilian Westcott Hale* and her article "Women Artists in Boston 1870-1940" (*American Art Review*).

Swinth relies for information largely upon Nancy Hale's memoir about her parents, *The Life in the Studio*. Nancy Hale's viewpoint colors the passages selected for inclusion by Swinth, particularly of Hale's childhood recollection of a presence around her mother which was "harsh, male, cruelly demanding." The negative male description (qtd. in Swinth 94) emerges from Nancy Hale's own opinions, which will be demonstrated through the examination of Hale's writing about her troubled relationships with men.

This dissertation discusses Lilian Westcott Hale and Nancy Hale as artists in a period of transition; it provides a close look at their art as a demonstration of the changes occurring for women. Since Linda Nochlin's 1971 essay "Why have there been no great women artists?" the method for situating analyses of women's positions in and contributions to the arts has undergone change. Art historians asserted the need, following Nochlin's essay, to reexamine the canon, correcting the absence of women from twentieth century art historical texts. The disappearance of women artists from art historical writings is described in Rozsika Parker's and Griselda Pollock's introduction to *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology*: "Curiously the works on women artists dwindle away precisely at the moment when women's social emancipation and increasing education should, in theory, have prompted a greater awareness of women's participation in all walks of life" (3). Feminist writers spent the decades immediately following the appearance of Nochlin's essay filling in the historical gap, often with writings intended only to prove the existence of women artists. The resulting efforts to recognize the absent women in twentieth century art historical documentation have corrected the discrepancy through acknowledgement of women art professionals. The increase in acceptance of women in art is highlighted by this episode described in *Old Mistresses*: "At a lecture at the Slade School of Art in 1962, the sculptor Reg Butler proposed a[n ...] identification of women with

procreativity and men with cultural creativity”(6). Butler’s words, which deny women’s creative ability, repeat the long-held belief that women were amateurs and men were professionals in the art world.

Parker and Pollock point out in *Old Mistresses* just how much gender historically worked against women:

The phrase ‘woman artist’ does not describe an artist of the female sex, but a kind of artist that is distinct and clearly different from the great artist. The term ‘woman’, superficially a label for one of two sexes, becomes synonymous with the social and psychological structures of ‘femininity’. The construction of femininity is historical. It is lived by women economically, socially and ideologically. (114)

The examination, through monographs and essays, of the many women artists excluded from twentieth century art historical texts was a necessary first step to a reevaluation of their role in the art world. Hirshler’s 1992 dissertation reestablishes Lilian Westcott Hale as a prominent Boston woman artist. Including Hale in the Colonial Revival movement, Hirshler concludes that the conservative philosophy that dominated Bostonian opinions toward art influenced the artists’ “disinclination to challenge the artistic convictions of the establishment; they wanted to join, not to disrupt, the fellowship of Boston artists” (209). This work will discuss Lilian Hale’s art within the cultural frame she occupied, as a demonstration of the sheltering constructs of her life. A kind of reciprocity guides the analysis: as the artist is shaped by her socio-cultural surroundings in the production of her art, so might her audience use that art to understand the social history of her particular surroundings. Parker and Pollock confirm the crucial need to consider the cultural period that shapes the artist’s life and the body of her work: “It is only



when we escape this disturbing fascination with her life and return her work to its context within a specific time, place, and school of painting that we can fully appreciate her activities as a painter” (*Old Mistresses* 21). The rediscovery of women artists involves art history and women’s issues as well as the connections between those and other disciplines. Griselda Pollock, in the new introduction to the 2003 reprinting of her work *Vision and Difference: Feminism, Femininity and the Histories of Art*, proclaims the need for “...a transdisciplinary initiative,” and she notes, “the umbrella under which I am now working in my several intellectual personae is cultural analysis, theory and history” (xxxiv). This dissertation investigates two women creating in different media forms, expressing their worlds through their sister arts. The process leads to discovery of the cultural structures that shape their lives and their art. Lilian and Nancy Hale’s works reflect their positions as women in two different eras, but they were also individuals shaped by a personal history. Griselda Pollock reminds us that “Feminist thought has never meant limiting women to the study of women’s issues. [...] It must mean broadening the entire field of intellectual endeavor to acknowledge the significance of sexual and other differences amidst the play of many social, economic, ideological, semiotic and psychological factors one might consider”(xxi). Feminism is not a twentieth century concept, but it has gained power and recognition as a conceptual force interacting with other culturally dynamic factors. It is a part of the complex interplay of structures which contributes to this discussion of the works of an artist and a writer, a mother and a daughter.

In addition to recognition of the feminist perspective in interpreting the work of Lilian and Nancy Hale, this discussion considers their eras, their social roles, and their family positions. The works of Lilian Westcott Hale and Nancy Hale fall within the historical period which was still shaped by the restrictions of Victorian American society. Lilian Westcott Hale’s roots were

sustained by its principles of social propriety, and although Nancy Hale was born into a similar social situation, she grew up in an era determined to deny Victorian rules of conduct.

Consideration of the Victorian age yielding to the modern is complicated by the definitions of the terms *modern*, *modernity*, and *modernism* in interdisciplinary works like this one. Susan Stanford Friedman coordinates the implications for the terms from the perspectives of different disciplines in her 2001 essay “Definitional Excursions: The Meanings of *Modern/ Modernity/ Modernism*.” She says that “...cross disciplinary work with modernity produces rich hybridities, but also some confusion” (501). As an example, Friedman uses the literary anthropological work of Marc Manganaro to examine the intersection of anthropology and discourse theory only to find that, “... the term *modernism* slips and slides between oppositional meanings” (502). In fact, Friedman finds that Manganaro’s essay collection, *Modernist Anthropology: from Fieldwork to Text*, not only fails to address the problems of modernism, but actually obfuscates the issue when it is observed across disciplines. This analysis of the world of two artists necessarily crosses disciplines, and it demands a determination before beginning, of exactly what is meant here by the term “modern,” which has been so variably defined and placed in time. I will rely upon what Friedman calls the relational mode to define the term for this analysis, examining the modern in relation to something else, something that occurred before. Friedman clarifies that “a relational definition stresses the condition of sensibility of radical disruption and accelerating change wherever and whenever such phenomenon appears, particularly if it manifests widely. What is modern or modernist gains its meaning through negation, as a rebellion against what once was...” (503). The modern approach was rooted in opposition, or a continual revision of the past; hence, its relational definition relies upon what preceded it, but, more precisely, in its absolute opposition to what preceded it.

The modern period was forceful in its rejection of Victorian beliefs, beginning around the turn of the century and reaching its rebellious climax during the 1920s and 1930s in America. This definition of modern has little to do with aesthetic interpretation of art periods, but it has much relation to the reformulative disruption of Victorian ideals as they appear in the period's art, specifically in the art of Lilian Westcott Hale and Nancy Hale. Parker and Pollock point out that "...the most important feature of Victorian writing on women was that it attributed natural explanations to what were in fact the result of ideological attitudes. It prescribed social roles and social behavior while pretending to describe natural characteristics" (*Old Mistresses* 10). This tendency of the Victorian era to dictate behaviors reflective of the desires of the social power brokers is illustrated by the section discussing Lilian Westcott Hale's idealized images of women.

*Old Mistresses* advanced the feminist argument, acknowledging that women artists have always existed; the significance of their work lies not in the fact of their existence but in the manner in which they were able to accomplish often very fine work despite their restrictive environments. Parker and Pollock call for a new way of looking at these artists, since "Each woman's work is different, determined by the specific factors of sex, class and place in particular historical periods" (*Old Mistresses* 49). Lilian Westcott Hale and Nancy Hale reveal their worlds through their artworks. They shape into art and text their personal ideas, their response to the people and the places that surround them, but more importantly, they respond to the social constructs of their eras, providing a chronicle of womanhood in their work. The first half of the twentieth century, when these two Hale women were creating their art, witnessed the demise of the strict constructs of Victorian society, and that social disruption is evidenced in different ways in their artworks.

Their work was shaped also by their positions within the socially significant Hale family of Boston. The Hale family for generations demonstrated tendencies toward scholarship and a blend of visual and textual skills. For example, Philip Hale's correspondence was sprinkled with illustrations, while also providing lively examples of the family's tendency to wordplay. Lilian Westcott Hale recalls one of his many limericks in her daughter Nancy's account of a re-enactment of the 1913 Armory Show in which Philip Hale had exhibited two paintings. The verse was inspired by the Duchamp painting *Nude Descending a Staircase* that caused such a stir in the exhibition:

If, returning from one of your bats,

You expected pink cows and blue rats,

But a lady, quite bare,

Descended the stair,

Now wouldn't that rattle your slats?" ("The World, the Flesh, and the Devil" 41).

Philip Hale's letters to his daughter, which consistently featured amusing illustrations, demonstrated his continual blending of verbal and literary abilities (figure 1). His father, Edward Everett Hale, a forceful and dominant personality, in addition to being the spiritual leader of a large congregation, was a prolific author who included drawings throughout his own personal communications. Edward Everett Hale's sister Susan, a writer and an artist, was responsible for his children's first art instruction.<sup>7</sup> Edward Everett Hale's six children to survive childhood, Philip among them, included two respected artists, an architect, and two writers. Only one

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<sup>7</sup> Nephew Edward E. Hale provides a fond portrait of Susan Hale to introduce her published letters. She is known to have been lively in both her conversation and in the large amount of correspondence that she produced; she traveled in Europe in the early 1870s to further her art education.

adopted the late nineteenth century fervor for industrialization by becoming a senior level railroad man. In *The Flowering of New England 1815-1865*, the popular historian Van Wyck Brooks says of the family, “To write a book for one of the Hales, was as natural as to breathe... [They] were all authors by instinct” (499).

Brooks might have added that they were all artists as well, capturing moments in time. Images of the past offer a method of recording along with the written word. The intersection of ideas demonstrated here through the work of two women will mingle their artistic and textual interpretations. The works of this mother and daughter emerge as remarkably different in perception of the world, resulting from the periods in which they grew up. The two eras emerge through two media forms, from two separate locations, each a significant hub for the period in question. Lilian Westcott Hale’s paintings and drawings treat the Victorian era from the conservative New England center of Boston, while Nancy Hale’s short stories and novels, often set in vibrant New York City, show the changes brought by the modern era.

Their work demonstrates the vigor and intelligence of two of the most highly respected women artists of their times. Although Nancy Hale insisted that the majority of her work never took place exactly as written, it was informed by her personal reality, and it reveals, through description, the time in which she lived. Mary Lee Settle introduces a 1988 reprinting of Nancy Hale’s 1942 best seller, *The Prodigal Women*, by describing Hale’s evocative sensory images:

Details glisten with recognition, and for those of us who have any memories of the time, they evoke a piercing recall. A woman spits into a mascara box to dampen the little brush that came with it, and a whole world flashes into a new reality: the mixture of coal smoke and clean linen which was the smell of thirties trains, the scent of *Evening in Paris*, the feel of silk stockings, the swish of a short

beaded skirt that those grand and gallant girls of the twenties slipped into—as the book says, “WITHOUT UNDERCLOTHES”—while we peek at them dressing and the talcum powder flies. (xii)

Nancy Hale’s fiction, like her mother’s artwork, gives entry to a bygone era, although it was not created as historical documentation. The body of the two artists’ work demonstrates the remarkable influence of the surrounding world on their personalities and ideals. Nancy Hale struggles in her fiction to resolve the sharply divergent notions of the propriety of her New England childhood with the rebellious impulsion of the modern era. In particular, the disparate gender constructs of the two worlds collide. Influenced by her New England girlhood, Nancy Hale wrote with a modern perception of the need to strike down old standards. Her problem lay in finding an adequate replacement for the trampled views.

Historians translate past eras by reflecting on the works produced during them by artists who represent their surroundings and their ideals. The connection of the creator to his culture is an intrinsic element of the creation; aesthetic theorist Arthur Danto offers a view of the relationship of the person [or artist] to the period and the artwork that results: “The conceptual structures of periods and persons are [...] sufficiently similar that we may speak of a period as having an inside and an outside, a kind of surface available to the historian and a kind of inwardness belonging to those who live the period in question, which is pretty much like the inward and outward aspects of the human personality” (205). The art produced in an era and in a given place is the outward expression of that inward aspect. The creations of a period demonstrate the inner, reflective reaction of people to their surroundings. Art engages the broad range of external factors surrounding the artist, and the artist’s unique response to them. This examination of the art of Lilian Westcott Hale and Nancy Hale provides insight to the viewpoints

of women who grew up in different time periods, one era struggling to maintain and the other to change, and it demonstrates just how persuasive external factors can be.

Lilian Westcott Hale produced the bulk of her artwork during the first half of the twentieth century. Her paintings and drawings embody the meaning she makes of her surroundings, influenced by childhood roots deep in Victorian New England. Trained to maintain a quiet attitude as demonstration of woman's inferior position to man, Lilian Hale created artworks that commented with the subtlety expected of women of the Victorian period. Through her art Lilian Hale acknowledged the great divide between the roles of men and women. Nancy Hale's writing career spanned more than a half century, beginning in the late 1920s. Her literary statements reflected the confusion brought on by the rejection of the Victorian standards she learned from her mother. The Hale works become cultural artifacts when examined contextually, and the gender constructs of the periods in which the two women created were central to their cultural identity.

A brief summary of the Hale women's individual surroundings including the cultural constructs of the times introduces this examination of their work as a demonstration of the transition from Victorian to modern. Their artworks reveal the individual artist's attitudes, feelings, and passions, but they also reflect the trends of the surrounding world. Cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz recognizes that people cannot be defined by their capabilities or their actions, but in what they contribute when joined, "by the way in which the first is transformed into the second [. . .] generic potentialities focused into [. . .] specific performances" (52). The clue to a person's being, Geertz says, lies in the links to culture. Specifically, he claims it is in the "*career*, in its characteristic course, that we can discern, however dimly [. . .] nature, and though culture is but one element in determining that course, it is hardly the least

important. As culture shaped us as a single species—and is still shaping us—so too it shapes us as separate individuals” (52).

The art careers of the Hale women were shaped by culture, family, and gender constructs, but the work they produced also reflected the demands of their periods. Although audience has gained a heightened profile in the age of consumerism, it possessed a power of which Lilian Westcott Hale was as aware in 1900 as her daughter Nancy Hale was in the 1930s. Their desire for artistic success and financial security drove mother and daughter to produce work acceptable within their separate worlds. The shift between Lilian Westcott Hale’s demonstration of Victorian ideals and Nancy Hale’s challenge of those ideals, incorporates moving between art forms, time periods, and cities, as the two women struggled to make their ways in artistic careers during periods which favored male production. While not aggressively feminist, the Hales’ determined professionalism, atypical for women in the first half of the twentieth century, set the mother and daughter apart from the norm. As Swinth notes in the introduction to her book about the lives of women visual artists from 1870 until 1930, the story of the period is not one of “patriarchy overturned but rather gain, backlash, and recouping as gender ideologies shifted and as women’s ability to access and leverage the dominant discourse and institutions changed” (4). These struggles and gains were recorded in the works produced by the two Hale women; first, through the subtle, restricted message of Lilian Westcott Hale; then, through the direct rejection of Victorian constructs by her daughter, Nancy Hale, demonstrating the contentious nature of the modern threat to Victorianism. Through their art, the two women provided a social chronicle of their times.

Lilian Westcott Hale and Nancy Hale shared the respect of their peers as they created their artworks, yet little is heard of them today. A critic from Lilian Hale’s era said of her:



““She has no equal among women painters and few men are her superiors”” (qtd. in Foster).

Nancy Hale, both prolific and popular in her era, is all but forgotten in the literary world where she was so recognized during her lifetime. Biographical accounts of Lilian Westcott Hale and Nancy Hale provide a first glimpse into their lives. The study that follows demonstrates the world of these two twentieth century women artists through their work, and it moves the discussion of Lilian Westcott Hale and Nancy Hale beyond biography to reveal the struggles with which women dealt on a daily basis. In *Imaging American Women: Idea and Ideals in Cultural History*, Martha Banta voices a concern for the audience’s preconceived response to art: “there is no such thing as an innocent eye, since we see what we expect to find in the world of objects surrounding us.” She adds that viewers of art are “tutored to see objects and persons in the forms of generalized types—especially the types of women equated with American principles” (Preface xxix). Lilian and Nancy Hale produce female types which, at times, conform to recognized social models. Their family relationship and shared years shaped their artworks, but the greater influence was the social structure of their periods. Their work, considered by contemporary critics to be among the finest produced during their time periods, is significant both in its quality and in what it reveals about the women of their respective eras.

## Lilian Westcott Hale: A Victorian Background

Lilian Westcott was born into the respectable Connecticut family of Harriet and Edward Westcott on 6 December 1880. Stanley Coben describes the female's position in Victorian households resembling the Westcott's in his 1991 work *Rebellion Against Victorianism: The Impetus for Cultural Change in 1920s America*: "Girls were specifically trained to preserve the sanctity of the Victorian home [...] girls learned to prize themselves for their beauty, passivity relative to males, and skills most useful for manipulating men into marriage" (16). He describes the women as self-conscious, and Mary Ann Stankiewicz in "The Creative Sister: An Historical Look at Women, the Arts, and Higher Education" explains the period's view toward women: "During the nineteenth century most people believed that woman was both finer and weaker than man. Like a fragile teacup, she could be easily shattered by too much contact with the rough world" (49). The family, which was male-dominated, protected girls from the surrounding world. According to Mark Poster's *Critical Theory of the Family*, the husband was "a free citizen, upon whom the wife was dependent. Bourgeois women were relative creatures whose sense of self was derived from their husband's place in the world" (169-170). She managed the household and cared for the children. The restrictive aspect of woman's domestic role could not suppress the artistic desires that Harriet Westcott shared with and encouraged in her daughters. The choices that Lilian Westcott made, despite her determination to be a professional artist, were governed by the need to maintain the image of domestic responsibility expected of Victorian women. Parker and Pollock in *Old Mistresses* demonstrate that her life choices were reflective of the period's tendency: "The practice of women artists was increasingly determined in the nineteenth century by the consolidation of bourgeois society and its ideologies of femininity—

the natural essence of womanhood sustained and reproduced through the location of women in the home and identification of women with domesticity” (*Old Mistresses* 38).

Harriet Westcott, nonetheless, integrated her preference for the arts, an accepted cultural refinement, into bringing up proper Victorian daughters.<sup>8</sup> She had studied and taught piano at Ingham University in New York, and she encouraged the two daughters who survived childhood<sup>9</sup> to pursue an art with more energy than the traditional approach that ladies took toward their hobbies. The older daughter, Nancy, concentrated on violin, while Lilian Westcott decided early to become a visual artist. Mary Ann Stankiewicz acknowledges two goals in educating a woman of the period: “to equip her to occupy her sphere of home and family and, should she be unable to marry, to train her in an occupation suited to her nature” (49). Harriet Westcott called upon her own musical skills when her husband died in 1898. Edward Westcott had never achieved wealth as an inventor and marketer of gun sights. His death forced his widow to support her family by giving piano lessons and taking in boarders. Lilian Westcott, by then enrolled in the Hartford Art School (Hirshler, “Lilian Westcott Hale” 38), took a practical view toward her career from the beginning of her training, a perspective which may have been influenced by her family’s situation. She was committed to her work, ignoring the distractions of most young girls despite her striking appearance. She was not, for example, interested in boys. Nancy Hale recalls of the Westcott girls: “Both sisters used often to be invited to cotillions at Trinity College and to proms at Yale, and at one of the latter my mother, ravishingly beautiful, escaped a group

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<sup>8</sup> Swinth points out that, particularly after the Civil War, art was viewed as an acceptable pursuit for women (18).

<sup>9</sup> An older sister, Mary Dent Westcott, called Dolly by the family, died of a ruptured appendix when she was nine years old (Hirshler, “Lilian Westcott Hale” 36).

of admirers to cling to her popular sister and hiss, ‘Those men want to *dance* with me! Make them stop!’” (“My Mother’s Solitudes” 39). Lilian Westcott’s dedication to art was coupled with her practical recognition of the need to make a living from her artwork if she were to pursue it without restrictions. Instructors took Lilian Westcott’s art seriously and provided advice about how she could best progress in the field. Despite the unfailing support she received at home, one piece of advice actually prevented Westcott from studying with a capable instructor for reasons of social propriety. After she attended classes with William Merritt Chase, one of the foremost American art instructors of the era, he wrote enthusiastically to her mother offering advice, instruction, and the strict admonishment to take the young artist’s work seriously: “I consider that your daughter has decided talent, and I would advise, by all means, that you help and encourage in every way you possibly can...” (SSC, HFP, 114.7). When Chase invited her to study with him on a continuing basis, Lilian Westcott related to her mother that her Hartford art teacher advised against Chase as an instructor because “she did not think he was the kind of a teacher for me” (SSC, HFP, 114.7). Her art teacher’s recommendation provides evidence of the social forces restricting women artists. Chase had a reputation as a dandy, and so association with him was forbidden to Lilian Westcott, but his honest good will allowed him to follow up the rejection with advice that she study instead in Boston with his friend Edmund Tarbell. Art historian Ives Gammell points out that Chase’s recommendation allowed the young artist to skip the preliminary instruction in the curriculum, proceeding immediately to advanced classes. This was not the first recognition of her superior abilities, for she had already been granted a Chase scholarship for her study at his Shinnecock summer school, as well as a scholarship from the Hartford Art Society, which funded her study in Boston beginning in 1900 (SSC, HFP, 94.17. Newspaper Clipping from *The Times* [presumably of Hartford, CT] 12 May 1899).

Lilian Westcott's tremendous capabilities along with the timing of her pursuit of an artistic career both worked in her favor. She embarked on her training when the position of women was improving. Americans studying art had been forced previously to travel to Europe for the necessary instruction and exposure to great masters. Women had encountered difficulties there, paying more than males for less attention in the studio (Swinth 50). It was felt on both continents that the growing numbers of women in the classroom lent an air of amateurism to the field (Swinth 26-27). The women students' struggle for equal training with male students was considerably less intense in America than the war for artistic equality had been in France. Madame Léon Bertaux, the founder of the Union des Femmes Peintres et Sculpteurs, led the arduous and lengthy fight for women's admission to L'Ecole des Beaux-Arts (Garb, "Revising" 63). She argued the inconsistencies in a system that she felt sent the message, "We very much want women artists, but we want to incarcerate them in the most humble mediocrity; they will be permitted to make industrial art, fans, screens, small pots of flowers and portraits of cats, but we bar to them the route which leads to honours and to glory. These we reserve for ourselves alone" (qtd. in Garb 79). For fifteen years women fought for admission to L'Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, and when they were finally allowed inside, the protest from the males was strong enough to close the school for a month. It reopened with significant restrictions in place to separate the genders in both the production of their work and the judging of that work.<sup>10</sup> The gender constructs in place limited women's lives even as they advanced steadily.<sup>11</sup> Tamar Garb

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<sup>10</sup> Chapter 1 of Tamar Garb's *Sisters of the Brush* details the historical events and the significance of the difficult struggle, noting both the threat it imposed on traditional gender relationships and the flawed institutional structures in place at the time.

<sup>11</sup> Garb offers a complete discussion of this complex situation: "The notion that sexes were different, and that nature required this to be so, was so entrenched in late nineteenth-century

describes the situation in *Sisters of the Brush*: “Perhaps what was most threatening about the entry of women into the *Ecole* was a fear of a loss of status for art as a whole. No longer the exclusive property of the most evolved of human beings, how could it continue to be seen to embody the greatest of human aspirations?”(101). The view of women artists as amateurs and the negative consequences that view brought to their participation in art institutions will be discussed more fully with the examination of Lilian Westcott Hale’s work.

While those changes taking place in Paris during the second half of the nineteenth century through the efforts of women like Madame Bertaux provide a general Western view, America adopted small reforms gradually and somewhat more smoothly, since a formal system of art instruction had not been instituted prior to the nineteenth century. Near the end of the century there were demonstrations of a gradual effort to close the formidable gender gap in art education, which removed the necessity for international instruction. The greater ease women encountered in entering America’s art institutions resulted in part from a key difference in the economic management of art education on the two continents. Lacking the government support enjoyed by the European system, America’s early art schools needed tuition from both sexes (Swinth 18).

During the nineteenth century art museums and institutes opened in major American cities.<sup>12</sup> While the academic world of American art did not universally open its doors to women, art education was evolving in America. Parker and Pollock point out that “Curiously the works

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parlance that it informed discussion at all levels. There was no escaping it. It permeated social critiques, psychological investigations, aesthetic theory, and literary debates alike” (115). She quotes George Romanes on the subject of the suitability of women’s emotions to flower arranging.

<sup>12</sup> The first of these, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia, opened in 1805.

on women artists dwindle away precisely at the moment when women's social emancipation and increasing education should, in theory, have prompted a greater awareness of women's participation in all walks of life" (Preface 3). Boston was historically receptive to women in the arts. The Museum School, which opened in 1877, admitted women in 1885. Before that, the Lowell Institute had been offering instruction to women since the middle of the nineteenth century. An influential instructor, William Rimmer, opened all of his classes to women for reasons that were advanced for the era. Rimmer believed that artistic ability was unrelated to sex, and, therefore, both sexes were entitled to the same instruction (Hirshler, "Lilian Westcott Hale" 13). However, even in Boston women's access to the art world remained somewhat restricted, often in a confusing manner as demonstrated by the St. Botolph's Club. The Club, founded in January of 1880, was open to a small group of male artists, which included Philip Hale (Hirshler, "Artist's Biographies" 211). Despite the gender restriction of its membership, the Club demonstrated a progressive viewpoint in the Boston art world. It promoted the avant-garde, which at that time referred to the American Impressionist movement. Part of that progressive viewpoint also was indicated by the Club's considerable support, through exhibitions, of women artists. Its positive reception to the works of both genders in its support of the best in contemporary art demonstrates an attitude of acceptance of women on an academic level despite its membership rules (Birmingham 31). The seemingly contradictory notions of the St. Botolph's Club, which supported women as artists even as it excluded them from membership, is indicative of the significant gender bias that America had inherited from Europe. Many of the artists of this period were educated in Paris, where the men enjoyed the fraternity of France's paternalistic art system. Returning to America, these male artists formed similar social

art groups to the ones they had enjoyed abroad. Swinth says of the brotherhoods, “Friendships in Paris translated into assistance and collegiality back home” (61).

Women were overcoming more than educational stumbling blocks in their struggle to become artists. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, the only acceptable reason for a woman to earn money was financial need (Nochlin, *Representing Women* 82). The desire to create did not justify a woman’s working as an artist. The career woman, who gains both a sense of personal worth as well as income from her job, was not a recognized entity. The major duty of the wife and mother was the care of the children, which required more dedication to the aspect of early education than it had previously in the history of family structure.<sup>13</sup> Lilian Westcott grew up in a Victorian patriarchal society in which women played a secondary role to their husbands. Men ran the world, and women ran their homes—if they were fortunate, for women generally desired marriage. Despite the social expectation that a woman should marry, Lilian Westcott decided, as she became more deeply involved in her studies, to devote herself to her art. She may have factored her widowed mother’s difficulty supporting her family into the consideration of her future. Nancy Hale wrote of Lilian Westcott’s family, “Her mother had often been very loving, but she could as easily be withdrawn and frightening. Her mother’s mother had been thrifty and efficient, a great admirer of suffering in other people and in herself, and she had impressed upon her daughters her own sense of resignation to the injustices of life” (“The Other Side” 82).

Women artists struggled to compete in a male dominated profession, and they gained support from each other. The generation of women artists preceding Lilian Westcott had learned

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<sup>13</sup> For a complete discussion of the historical background of the family unit and its treatment of children see Mark Poster’s *Critical Theory of the Family*.



noteworthy lessons from which the new blood at the turn of the century benefited. The travel experience required to achieve their education provided the preceding generation with a level of control of their lives which was as educational as their exposure to the masterpieces of Europe's great museums. They struggled to exhibit their works alongside male artists in the Paris Salon, and they proved through that direct competition that women could perform on the same level as their male counterparts. The returning women acquired a sense of artistic professionalism that guided them in America. They drew strong support from each other, not unlike the European brotherhoods for men. The women's version, however, was based on not only the friendships that the men so enjoyed, but on furthering knowledge and helping each other to achieve professional goals.

Many women artists, like Mary Cassatt, chose not to marry, instead pursuing art. Those who did marry frequently struggled first with the decision, aware that talented women who succumbed to Cupid's arrow too often found poison in the dart in the form of the social expectations of the combined roles of wife and mother, which could smother would-be careers. Lilian Westcott's correspondence indicates the determination to pursue her art as more than just a hobby, although she did not fight the Hartford teacher who changed her life by recommending against study with William Merritt Chase. This seeming disparity in her ideas and her actions actually illustrates Lilian Westcott's determination to paint and to satisfy the constructs of Victorian society as well. Swinth describes the two distinct types of women artists of the period: "The divide between amateur and serious women represented an important conflict over the root meaning of female artistry—the expression of a lady's cultivated refinement or the work of a disciplined professional" (33).

Lilian Westcott moved to Boston at the turn of the century to continue her study in a location that in many ways reflected her Victorian New England upbringing. Trevor Fairbrother calls Boston thinking “single-minded conventionalism” (77), which provides the rationale for Boston’s rejection of the emerging tendency in New York City’s art to document with harsh realism the plight of the working man. Until the turn of the century, Boston had been recognized as the center for technical accomplishment in American art, and its instructors were thought to be among the most educated purveyors of European technique. Lilian Westcott was perfectly suited to an atmosphere that admired technique over the throbbing intensity of depictions of urban life developed by New York’s Ashcan artists. The Boston artists were not entirely averse to change; they did desire advancement beyond the European training that they had spent so many years acquiring. Trevor Fairbrother explains: “In a sense, their ultimate ideal was to create conditions in which more thoroughly American art (whatever that might prove to be) could be created at home, while acknowledging that the immediate future would involve a great deal of study and modification of European models” (30).

The Boston art world did not consider Boston dry and conservative, but rather a center for thought and high quality art of various types. The public buildings were a source of pride, the city had long dominated the literary mainstream, and Boston was filled with both artists and art lovers. It was the home of the first public school and the first university in the country. Despite its abundance of exclusively male clubs and because of the city’s general respect for art and education, Boston offered women the opportunity to compete with men. The first Ph.D. awarded to a woman in America was granted in 1877 from Boston University (Vance 19). Arriving there at the turn of the century, a young artist would not have noticed a shift that has been perceived on historical reflection, one of which Theodore Stebbins speaks in his

introduction to Trevor Fairbrother's book about turn-of-the-century Boston: "Boston simply seems to have lost its adventurous spirit around 1900, or by 1910 at the latest" (3). The shift in Boston occurred, according to Stebbins, as a result of self-satisfaction with the city's previous accomplishments, in addition to a fear of change. The cultural conservatism fit with Lilian Westcott's New England upbringing, and she studied to develop the capability to make her own way in the art world. Lilian Westcott's letters to her mother indicate this practical side to her nature when she writes at the turn of the century, "There is more money in portrait painting when it is once conquered than in anything else" (SSC, HFP, 102.14). Harriet Westcott provided unwavering support through a flow of letters to her daughter while she studied away from home. She wrote her encouragement in the winter of 1901: "I long to have your brush inspired that it may do those great things that you think it takes a long time of practice and experience for the hand to become responsive to the thought—but it is coming, Honey, and I hope I shall live to see your work recognized as great" (SSC, HFP, 102.14). She wrote in the same letter of the importance of health and happiness, which she desired for her daughter, noting that without them, Lilian Westcott would make little progress in her field.

Harriet Westcott acknowledged happiness as taking the form of marriage. Lilian Westcott wrote of her uncertainty about marriage, although it was the traditional means of support for respectable young women of the era. Her struggle with the either-or dilemma of marriage and art was shared by other women artists. Linda Nochlin describes similar feelings in Rosa Bonheur. Fearing the loss of personal independence, "...she rejected marriage for herself and implied an inevitable loss of selfhood for any woman who engaged in it," while at the same time she felt that marriage was an essential element of organized society ("Why" 172). In a recent work of feminist rediscovery of the sculptor Bessie Potter Vonnob, Julie Aronson

describes Robert Vonnob's proposal to the artist in 1899 as "throwing her into a state of nervous confusion." Her ultimate acceptance led friends to speculate that she might give up her artwork (99). Correspondence files in the Sophia Smith Collection indicate the significant turmoil Lilian Westcott also endured in her consideration of Philip Hale's proposal. Lilian Westcott could not avoid men in an occupation that they clearly dominated, despite her resolve to pursue her art. Ironically, she met the Boston Museum school instructor in Hartford while home visiting after her move to Boston. A mutual friend suggested her as a model for the visiting artist, Philip Hale, who was established already as a painter, a critic, and an instructor. Hale was a part of that group which Stebbins describes as dominating the art world in Boston: "... the painters were to an amazing degree either Brahmin (in the literal sense of being from one of the forty or so long-time, dominant families) or very close in attitude and association to that rigid, ethnically unified upper class" (6). Philip Hale was not as wealthy as many members of the Boston Brahmin establishment, but his name signified a family of impressive contributions to the shaping of the country; in Boston, name was everything. The importance of birthright to Bostonians is made comically clear by Cleveland Amory in his novel, *The Proper Bostonians*. The work begins with an anecdote:

There is a story in Boston that in the palmy days of the twenties a Chicago banking house asked the Boston investment firm of Lee, Higginson & Co. for a letter of recommendation about a young Bostonian they were considering employing. Lee, Higginson could not say enough for the young man. His father, they wrote, was a Cabot, his mother a Lowell; farther back his background was a happy blend of Saltonstalls, Appletons, Peabodys, and others of Boston's First Families. The recommendation was given without hesitation.

Several days later came a curt acknowledgment from Chicago. Lee, Higginson was thanked for its trouble. Unfortunately, however, the material supplied on the young man was not exactly of the type the Chicago firm was seeking. "We were not," their letter declared, "contemplating using Mr. ---- for breeding purposes." (11)

Amory might have included the name Hale in his choices for recognizable lineage. Philip Hale's position as a Boston Brahmin was provided by his name, despite a lack of the wealth which often accompanied the breeding. His father, Edward Everett Hale, was arguably the most powerful man in Boston at the turn of the century. Philip Hale's social position may have acted in his favor when he proposed to Lilian Westcott, and his perseverance is indicated by the stream of increasingly romantic correspondence during their courtship. Hale also offered a bride security through his instructor's position with the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, yet Lilian Westcott struggled with an answer to his proposal. She sought advice from loved ones about the frightening leap into domestic seclusion which often accompanied marriage, especially fearful of marriage's potential to compromise her art. Linda Nochlin says in her seminal essay about women's role in art, "Then as now, despite men's greater 'tolerance,' the choice for women seems always to be marriage *or* a career, i.e., solitude as the price of success *or* sex and companionship at the price of professional renunciation" ("Why" 167). Her family's financial situation may have prompted Harriet Westcott's encouragement to Lilian to marry Philip Hale, even though she held high aspirations for her daughter's artistic career.

The period assumption that all women of respectable social position aspired to the role of wife and mother was not shared by Lilian Westcott. She approached the prospect of marriage as an artist of some promise, unwilling to sacrifice her aspirations. Philip Hale's frequent letters

during their courtship indicate his acceptance and support of her artistic pursuits. Such ideas were far from universal; in *A Woman's Proper Place*, Sheila Rothman says that “To work openly had almost as much shame about it as to take charity...” (85). Her examination of the female role at the end of the nineteenth century includes the description of a women’s exchange which provided the opportunity to its women members to sell the creative and useful items they produced without allowing the public to know who made them (86). Such secrecy was intended to protect the women creators from public ridicule of their industry. At that time there was little use of the existing childcare facilities, because there was little need for them. Good mothers stayed at home and cared for their families. Victorian society protected women from the world even as women artists sought recognition alongside male artists. Philip Hale and Lilian Westcott worked within general social dictates, but they were influenced also by family models. Lilian Hale was raised by a mother who was forced to support her family, and the Hale family tree was sprinkled with successful women writers and artists.

A letter from Philip Hale during the courtship indicates both the difficulty of Lilian Westcott’s decision and his support for her work:

I want what is best for you. If you feel you want a year or two of foreign study—well—it’s all right [...] It all rests with you dearest. Only don’t worry about it. Whichever way you decide is all right. What you desire is right. Why try to decide at all just now? Just let things slide till it’s borne in on you just what you want to do. My great and chiefest feeling is that I don’t want you, in the years to come, to look back, and in your heart of hearts regret [...] I want you to feel that you’ve had a first rate show and haven’t been interfered with—not to feel that “it might have been.” (SSC, HFP, 91.1)

He says of her prospects, “I think you are worrying about the future [...] thinking whether you ought to marry me now. Now, dear, don’t worry about it at all. Let it go as it goes” (SSC, HFP, 91.1). Despite her recognition that marriage was often an obstacle to women artists, Lilian Westcott accepted Hale’s proposal, a decision that was not universally approved. In “The Life and Work of Lilian Westcott Hale” Joan Archer comments on the disappointment of fellow students and the surprise of Lilian Westcott’s professors at her decision to marry, clearly viewing her choice as a compromise of her art (126).

Women artists often produced less work after marriage, but in the case of Lilian Westcott’s marriage, fears were unfounded. Philip Hale played a supportive role, providing the instructive critiques that Lilian Westcott Hale sought out. He writes during the courtship to Lilian Westcott, “...you know I’m always interested in what you’re doing and take just as much pride in your doing a good thing as you could take yourself” (SSC, HFP, 90.17). His support is as positive and encouraging as the emotional reinforcement that her mother had provided so consistently. In choosing marriage, Lilian Westcott may have been influenced by her awareness of a woman’s need to ensure economic security as well as her affection for Hale.<sup>14</sup> Through her marriage to Philip Hale, Lilian Westcott joined a large number of women like those described by Germaine Greer in opening her 1979 feminist analysis of women in the arts, *The Obstacle Race*. Greer speaks of the pervasive tendency of the historically recognized women painters to have maintained meaningful connections to well-known male painters (12). Lilian Westcott chose for her life partner, a respected art instructor, critic, and painter. Nonetheless, Ives Gammell

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<sup>14</sup> Lilian Westcott Hale had already shown a predilection for art forms that might provide an income, and she demonstrated a New England practicality. Laura Morowitz and William Vaughan speak of the difficulties women encountered in deciding to remain single during the era in the Introduction to *Artistic Brotherhoods in the Nineteenth Century* (24).

stressed the independent spirit that she maintained (“An Appreciation”), and in a 1927 article Rose Berry concurred that Lilian Hale was fortunate to receive instruction from capable painters who did not attempt to mold her work. William Merritt Chase was fearful of interfering with her technique, and the colleague he recommended to teach her in Boston, Edmund Tarbell, demonstrated similar restraint (60-61). From the earliest correspondence, Philip Hale, who was more than fifteen years her senior, expressed an interest which did not appear to be controlling, in regard to both the artist who was the object of his affection and her artwork. His love letters were formulaic, speaking first of their last meeting, then expressing his admiration for her, and uniformly closing with comments about her work and her artistic ability. Nearly a year before their marriage he wrote, “I wish you all sorts of luck with your start this morning. Do just a bit better each two weeks and we shall have you a great painter one of these days. I keep wishing I could think of ways to help you on with your work, but there really is no way but to stand round and say ‘good luck’ at each new effort” (SSC, HFP, 90.16).

Philip Hale provided financial support for his family through teaching and writing about art, removing the immediate necessity for his young wife to support herself by selling her work. While she was practical in her awareness of the need to sell her art to establish herself as a professional, marriage offered the security and the freedom to work at her own pace. Nancy Hale recalls her father speaking of her mother’s career: “My father told me with pride how, at the opening of exhibitions [...] one Boston dealer used to put up a velvet cord across the entrance until the cream of the buying cream had had a preliminary view. When the cord was taken down, every picture in the show would have been sold” (“Eyes and No Eyes” 52). The *Boston Transcript* remarks tongue-in-cheek of two respected faculty members at the School of Fine Arts: “Both Mr. Hale and Mr. Paxton have talent, and it is a pity that they should not make



the best of themselves. We suggest that they take a few lessons of Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Paxton” (qtd. in Hirshler, “Women Artists” 134).

Lilian and Philip Hale were part of a conservative world, and they reflected the times as they shaped their own lives to inhabit that world without conflict. Swinth points out that marriages like that of Maria Oakey Dewing to her artist husband shifted the work of the wife from outdoor flower paintings to indoor still lifes. To continue working, Swinth says, “...required her to stifle her own ambitions” (95). Although Swinth acknowledges that the Hales “shared a life shaped by art” (93), she interprets daughter Nancy Hale’s memories of her mother asking for a “crit” from her father when he returned home, as a requirement for his ego. Philip Hale has been viewed as uncomfortable with the dynamic of his relationship with his wife,<sup>15</sup> and Swinth suggests that “...he was made anxious and uncertain by his relative failure and its disruption of traditional gender roles; she [Lilian Hale] was required, despite her rising professional stature, to play the role of pupil and keep gender hierarchies in order” (93). Hirshler also acknowledges the hierarchy in the couple’s relationship; they maintained their early positions as master and pupil, which complemented the subservient wife’s role expected of Lilian Hale by her era. Explains Hirshler, “Her attitude doubtless helped to make their marriage work, but her feelings were genuine, not calculated, and Lilian Hale depended upon Philip Hale’s experience and encouragement to overcome her own professional apprehensions” (*“Drawn with Butterfly’s Wings”* 6). Philip Hale’s response to praise of his own art with “Wait

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<sup>15</sup> Swinth says the relationship between the older instructor and his young wife, who was the better painter, developed “an awkward dynamic” and she interprets Lilian Hale’s relationship toward her husband as conciliatory in nature (94-95).

until you see Mrs. Hale's pictures," clearly expresses his pride in her accomplishments.<sup>16</sup> Certainly any two people who live and work together in the same profession must at times experience a degree of awareness of the relative merits of their works. Furthermore, Philip Hale's extensive education and critical expertise made it impossible for him to ignore his wife's greater skill. The constructs of gender at the time supported a man's decision to forbid his wife to pursue her artwork, but Philip Hale encouraged his wife's career even within Boston's rigid social frame. He was an art instructor, and his wife, who met him in her student years, continually valued his critical assessments of her work. Nancy Hale describes her father's position in the marriage:

He never, never spared his bounty of criticism for Lilian's own work.

Jealousy could have got in so easily. He must have been secretly jealous....Her first exhibition in Boston she sold every picture in it before it opened and she used to get commissions all the time. He knew so much more. He knew the history of art backwards and forwards. But he refrained from expressing any rivalry and he never sought the limelight (Interview 1-2).

Swinth concludes her discussion of the couple's marriage with the interpretation that the divided roles Lilian Hale played, exhausted her. Swinth relies for support on Nancy Hale's description of the effects: "It was as if some fearful presence [...] harsh, male, cruelly demanding" (qtd. in Swinth 94) hovered to destroy her creativity. Swinth's observation appears logical, but it fails to recognize that Nancy Hale may be insinuating personal ideas about the restrictive nature of the menacing male, resulting from her own experiences. Such an

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<sup>16</sup> Footnote 12 of "*Drawn with Butterfly's Wings*." Qtd. from D104: 269 of Archives of American Art.

interpretation is supported by the close examination of the writer's life and work which follows. An additional factor which may have colored Nancy Hale's account was the discovery after her father's death of his epistolary romance. The recognition that his romantic nature could have extended to someone other than her mother must have been tremendously disappointing to the devoted daughter. While Nancy Hale's description, quoted in Swinth, recalls a situation from her youth, the passage is written after many years have passed, and Hale has encountered her own difficulties with dominating males who are openly jealous of her success and intent upon restricting her writing. Swinth comments that the artist husbands were sometimes helpful to their wives, and she recognizes that many women, on marrying, either abandoned their work or, like Lilian Hale, altered it to suit their life restrictions. Swinth concludes that, "Lilian Hale's uneasy alliance with Philip was, undoubtedly, a worthwhile compromise" (95).

In retrospect, Lilian Westcott Hale's choice of marriage over European study may have been a wiser career decision than even she thought it would be. Swinth describes the lack of advice or encouragement art students received abroad, where during weekly critiques in the Paris ateliers they hoped to hear "not bad" (46). Swinth acknowledges that the women received inferior instruction to the men with half as many critiques, and for this treatment they paid twice as much as the men (49). Lilian Westcott's choice to marry brought her nightly critiques from one of Boston's finest instructors. Her mother's support had buoyed her in her youth, and Philip Hale's family stood staunchly behind her after marriage. In a clear demonstration of respect for her work, Edward Everett Hale, an eminent spiritual leader, told Lilian Hale "...shortly after her marriage to his son, 'Lily, don't get into church work, whatever you do. You won't be able to get any painting done' (Hale, Nancy. "A Good Light" 102 ).

Philip Hale endured his wife's superior art efforts with good humor, and the Hales created a marriage that allowed Lilian Hale to pursue a career despite the expectations of the surrounding world, which exercised an element of control over their lives. They were early tenants in the Fenway Studios building where their adjoining spaces were decorated with stark simplicity. When Lilian Hale gave up her studio upon the birth of Nancy in 1908, she made both a practical and a socio-political move in her decision to work from home. It was expected that a mother should provide maternal supervision in the home as the ruler of the domestic sphere of life. Hale's early preference for portrait painting could be accomplished there, along with the other genres she pursued. In her discussion of portraiture's history, Shearer West recognizes several reasons why women artists like Hale elected to become portrait painters, including the fact that the women could produce their work within their own homes, without upsetting social rules. Another factor contributing to their choice was that "portraits were also considered a low and mechanical genre of art for many centuries, and women were traditionally viewed as creatively limited and best at arts that required imitation rather than creation. Thus portraiture could be justified as an acceptable practice for women artists" (145). Lilian Hale pursued the options acceptable for a woman as she combined art, marriage, and motherhood. Her ability to manage the multiple demands was made possible through Philip Hale's total support. Indeed, it was with his encouragement that she retained the household help that was commonplace for the period (Hale, Nancy. *Life in the Studio* 92).

If there were any unpleasantness or tension in their private world, Lilian Hale did not indicate it in an interview many years after her husband's death. She registers only appreciation for his support and the nightly critiques he provided about her works-in-progress: "I learned more from him than anyone else I ever studied with. He was the greatest help to me in the

world[...] I only wish that I'd studied with him first and then learned painting, working from the bottom up, instead of backwards.' Mr. Hale came to her studio every day after teaching classes, 'to criticize my work and to talk about art'" ("Tea Set" 6). The exterior world provided the frame for the private life the couple constructed, which held at its center—art. In *The Slavery of Sex: Feminist-Abolitionists in America*, Blanche Glassman Hersh states that nineteenth century marriages could not be equal partnerships because men expected their wives to play a role of subservience (241). Philip Hale was not a controlling personality, but Lilian Hale allowed marriage and motherhood to shape her artistic career. She conformed her world to social expectations, and Hirshler points out that in the years immediately following her husband's death in 1931, Lilian Hale started only one new artwork which she called, significantly, *Blighted Hope* ("Drawn with Butterfly's Wings" 19). He may have displayed characteristics of the male dominance of his era, but when Philip Hale died of peritonitis from a ruptured appendix, his wife lost a valuable critic and an encouraging mentor. She wrote to her daughter in 1932, shortly after Philip Hale's death, "I am fortunate to have always been able to do my kind of work. I couldn't have if I hadn't married such a husband who was a rock and made everything possible [...] I think now one never need to worry if one is content to *be* simply and not as someone else expects you to be [my emphasis]. We were content to be that way..." (SSC, HFP, 8 Oct. 1932, 90.21).

The art Lilian Westcott Hale produced was shaped by Victorian social constructs and the academic tradition adopted by Boston's artists, both of which were confining. Julie Aronson's 2008 work about Bessie Potter Vonnoh reflects on Vonnoh's ability to balance art with life, an ability which Hale shares. Both women, producing during the same general time period, were highly successful when measured by their critical recognition, and Aronson's description of

Vonnoh's success can be applied to Hale as well. She determines that Vonnoh's "success with the critics was predicated in part on playing into the stereotypes of women's art. It is delicate, fragile, intimate, domestic—in a word, what was termed 'feminine'" (223). Aronson interprets Vonnoh's career as both groundbreaking and conformative: "As much as Vonnoh bolstered the careers of other women by acting as a role model and breaking down institutional barriers, she unintentionally hindered their efforts to overcome the stereotypes by producing superb art that conformed to notions of what women's art should be" (223). Lilian Hale also worked within the accepted codes, producing art deemed appropriate for a woman.

Rigid social and artistic rules confined women to the home and dictated which art genres were acceptable for them, yet Lilian Hale thrived artistically within their frame, always encouraged in her pursuits by Philip Hale. Patriarchal attitudes at the turn of the century dictated that men were of the world and women were of the home, and Philip Hale worked within the system to provide the financial and academic support to help Lilian Hale grow as an artist. Again, a comparison can be drawn to Aronson's analysis of Bessie Potter Vonnoh's relationship with her husband. Both of the Vonnohs were artists—he a painter and she a sculptor. Robert Vonnoh was older than his wife, and Philip Hale was significantly older than Lilian Hale. Bessie Potter's friends were stunned, as Lilian Westcott's had been, by her decision to marry. Aronson reveals the speculation by Bessie Potter's friends about whether she would stop producing art upon marriage, acknowledging that a large number of successful women artists did not marry, among them Mary Cassatt and Cecilia Beaux. Aronson notes three ingredients that "made for a fruitful professional life as a married woman: a well-established career prior to the wedding, an exceptionally supportive husband, and a marriage that remained childless" (Aronson 99). Only one of the three criteria to which Aronson attributes Potter's career success also applies to Hale.

Lilian Westcott Hale's career was not established when she married, since she was younger than Vonnoh at the time. Philip Hale was certainly supportive of his wife's art career, but while the Vonnohs remained childless, the Hales had a daughter. Although both men provided the financial stability to allow their wives to pursue their work unhindered by financial worry, Philip Hale's mentorship was more consistent than Robert Vonnoh's, which was frequently interrupted by his travels to pursue art commissions. Aronson mentions one more factor which the two couples shared: the dominating mother that both women brought to their marriages. Bessie Potter Vonnoh's mother actually lived with the couple and ran the household to allow her only child to work. Philip Hale tolerated his mother-in-law's visits although she wielded great influence over her daughter. In "The Other Side" Nancy Hale recalls that power by recounting her mother's tale of how she came to have a child:

"...your grandmother never wanted your aunt and me to have children" [...] she couldn't bear to have her daughters endure the ordeal that, for her, childbirth had been. Incredibly enough, she was able to effect her will. My aunt never did bear a child and, "It never occurred to me in those days that I *could* disobey my *mother*," my own mother said. After she and my father had been married several years, however, my grandmother took Aunt Nancy to Brussels for a winter to study the violin. My father said to my mother, "Let's have a baby, quick, before she gets back," and that was how I was born and thought of. (88)

The revealing story indicates both Harriet Westcott's influence on her daughter's career and the force of her personality. The choice of motherhood was perhaps the only action that Lilian Hale took in defiance of her mother. It was a decision that she never appeared to regret, although she wrote her mother in 1911 when her daughter was three, "I only had seven pictures for sale this

year and two of them have not found purchasers. At any other exhibition I had sixteen or eighteen for sale but that was before the days when I had the most loved and adored baby that she lived to be with. One cannot expect to have all of the pleasures and joys of life at the same time!” (SSC, HFP, 100.15).

Along with the support of her family, Erica Hirshler suggests an additional factor contributing to Lilian Westcott Hale’s success in “Women Artists in Boston 1870-1940.” She comments that the way had been paved for the women artists of Boston at the turn of the last century by the preceding generation of women, who sought the implementation of art programs for both sexes, and who struggled for permission to work from the live model. These women formed support alliances with other women, as well as with societies which would exhibit their works. They truly eased the way for the next generation of women artists which included Lilian Westcott Hale (136). Hirshler specifically mentions the frequent art discussions Lilian Hale enjoyed with sister-in-law Ellen Day Hale. Ten years older than Philip Hale and a full generation older than his wife, Ellen Day Hale freely shared her European training and wide range of artistic experience, providing insights for Lilian Hale and many other women.<sup>17</sup> Swinth also comments that the women painting in Boston learned from the women artists of the previous generation, following the same market and aiming for exposure through sending their work to exhibitions. She notes particularly Lilian Westcott Hale’s efforts and her willingness to fulfill commissions and exhibit frequently (168-169). In that, she was supported and prodded by the

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<sup>17</sup> Ellen Day Hale has been widely cited as an example of the era’s women who made the ground-breaking advances which proved so useful to Lilian Hale’s generation. Swinth features Ellen Day Hale’s self-portrait on the cover of *Painting Professionals: Women Artists & the Development of Modern American Art, 1870-1930*, a work which describes Hale’s role as a mentor inspiring women’s artistic achievement.



artistic enthusiasm of Ellen Day Hale, who brought so many new students into the atelier where she studied in Paris, that her instructor Julian offered her a reduced rate (85).

Ellen Day Hale never married, sustaining instead a “Boston marriage”<sup>18</sup> with the artist Gabrielle Clements and maintaining a devoted correspondence with her sister-in-law until her own death in 1940. The female artists and their group entities were equally as important as their male counterparts’ supportive fraternal organizations.<sup>19</sup> In their attempt to improve the position of women in the art world, female groups functioned within the system rather than acting as aggressively negative outside forces. Such restraint was especially required in the nineteenth century, when any breach in socially normative behavior put them at risk of being labeled hysterics or worse. The women artists were so serious about their art, Swinth says, that they did not push for strong organization (61). Group spirit was a greater factor within the male brotherhoods; women were supportive, yet individual in their work. Swinth describes, “The earliest women’s clubs, the New England Woman’s Club in Boston and Sorosis in New York, both founded in 1868, established a pattern of organizing for self-education, self-improvement, and the benefits of association. These two clubs became the foundation of what nineteenth-century women called ‘organized womanhood’” (118). Many of the more recognized women artists questioned affiliation with such groups, but they were professional in nature and dedicated to the concept of education and good works. Women had begun to help other women, and as Nancy Hale says of Ellen Day Hale’s home on the ocean, “...at Aunt Nelly’s for the first time I

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<sup>18</sup> The expression refers to the large number of relationships beginning in the nineteenth century involving two women living together without a male’s support. The relationships always involved a commitment, whether or not they were of a sexual nature.

<sup>19</sup> Laura Morowitz and William Vaughan make this point in the introduction to their work about artistic brotherhoods.

saw art lived corporately—a shared vocation to be embarked on daily with cries of joy” (“Joyous Gard” 181). While Ellen Day Hale acted as a lively mentor for women artists, Lilian Hale was more nurtured than nurturing on her visits to the artistic gathering place, and Nancy Hale recalls her work as clearly superior to the other women’s.

The mentoring support of the women artists contributed to their individual successes. Ellen Day Hale and Lilian Hale shared a devotion to their art, the support of family, and a mutual affection. They struggled to build careers despite a social structure which expected women artists to forfeit personal pursuits for marriage and family (Nochlin, “Why” 166). This is not to say that the two women defied social expectations. Ellen Day Hale, for example, spent many years caring for an ailing mother and acting as her father’s social attaché, even moving to Washington, D.C. when Edward Everett Hale served as the Chaplain of the Senate. The same spirit of family responsibility, an expectation of women of the period, was apparent in Lilian Westcott Hale. She contributed to her mother’s care until Harriet Westcott died, and she remained devoted to Ellen Day Hale in her old age. Although she was able to work during her daughter’s childhood, Lilian Hale sacrificed many productive years to the care of Nancy Hale’s children, a subject which will be addressed later. Women were emotional caregivers while men provided financially for their families, and the new professional group of practicing women artists maintained their loyalty to family duties in addition to trying to fulfill their artistic ambitions. In spite of her family’s support of her career, Lilian Hale suffered from exhaustion, which may have had psychological origins. Nancy Hale recalls her arrival with her mother at Ellen Day Hale’s summer home:

She was always exhausted when we first arrived at The Thickets, with that mysterious exhaustion—that disease of fatigue—thwarting her every active

impulse at home and haunting my childhood. On winter afternoons, when I got home from school, she was often lying down, face flushed, a cold compress on her forehead. Her large gray eyes met mine piteously as I entered the darkened bedroom.

‘I’m all tuckered out,’ she would say, trying to joke. ‘I’ve had to cave in.’

(Joyous Gard 178)

Poster claims such behavior results from women’s difficulty maintaining a socially inflicted image of perfection. He explains that “Among the bourgeoisie, women were viewed as asexual beings, as angelic creatures beyond animal lust. When internalized, this image of women led to profound emotional conflicts” (168). The idealized image of women in Victorian society was impossible to maintain in the real world. Nancy Hale says of her mother’s continual effort to be artist, wife, and mother, “‘Overdoing’ was a word of fear, all through my youth.” She recalls a client periodically sending a car to pick up her mother for a relaxing drive: “Attentions such as these made my father pull the corner of his mouth down, and I knew that he was thinking it unfair she should be considered domestically careworn, when he never wanted her to do all that cooking in the first place” (*Life in the Studio* 92). The role she was forced to play as a woman was not the only conflicted area of Lilian Westcott Hale’s life. Women artists walked a cautious line with the critics whose approval they needed. Hirshler says, “...gender-based commentary is common in the nineteenth-century criticism, and a woman artist was most often faulted either way. If her work was described as masculine, displaying a direct and confident painting style, the painter had denied her ‘true’ nature; if it were described as feminine, it was often dismissed as pretty, sensitive, and ultimately unimportant” (Hirshler, *Studio of her Own* 36).

Women artists in the early twentieth century shared a position of artistic inferiority. Lilian Hale's success was facilitated by sympathetic mentors. At Ellen Day Hale's death, Lilian Hale inherited the summer home on Cape Ann, Massachusetts where she had visited frequently with her daughter. Nancy Hale recalls the reason for the inheritance in "A Good Light":

When my father died, his sister Nelly presented my mother with a house on Cape Ann. It had been my grandfather's custom to give each of his sons a house when they married, but when my parents married they didn't want a house. They were going to live in their studio, and I was not to be so much as thought of for another six years. Aunt Nelly's gift represented the house my father never got. (108)

Years later when Nancy Hale was cleaning out the studio in the same granite house that she had inherited at her mother's death, she burst into tears recalling the splendid time the women artists had shared there: "What astonished me was not so much that I should be crying as what, I realized, I was crying about. It was not because my mother or Aunt Nelly was dead, or out of sadness for all those other artists, Aunt Nelly's friends, who also used the place long ago; but because, in the silence of the studio, I remembered what a wonderful time they all had" ("Joyous Gard" 175). Despite the restrictions on women artists which Ellen Day Hale had experienced firsthand, she was a gay and lively painter and printmaker who provided Lilian Hale with knowledge and encouragement (*A Studio of Her Own* 34). After Philip Hale's death, she continued his championing of Lilian Hale's efforts. Like other women artists of the time, Lilian Hale benefited tremendously from the support of the artistic sisterhood; in particular, the importance of Ellen Day Hale's influence on Lilian Hale cannot be over-stressed in the discussion of Lilian Westcott Hale's art.

## Nancy Hale: From Traditional Beginnings

Nancy Hale was shaped by her era and her family. Her childhood was modeled by the conservative atmosphere of Boston, her father's distinct artistic influence, and her mother's Victorian views. Lilian Hale's perspective was shaped by the domestic confinement of women during the Victorian era, which is evidenced in her art. The strict behavioral guidelines which repressed women like Lilian Hale provided the focus for the changes proposed by the next era. By the time that Nancy Hale was born on 6 May 1908, the restrictive mood was waning, replaced by the modern tendency to reject what came before. The generation attempting to break down Victorian ethics was motivated by such disruptive influences as war, urbanization, and the accompanying increase in commercialism. The woman's position in the world concerned Nancy Hale, and she assessed it repeatedly in her writing in a far more aggressive manner than her mother had with her subtle artistic statements about gender. The two women's thinking on the subject of a woman's place in the world diverged sharply, a reflection of the differences between their eras.

Nancy Hale's family's position and artistic versatility contributed to shaping her view of the world. She admired her father and his family. The Hales had distinguished themselves since their early arrival in America, guaranteeing her acceptance in staid Boston society. Philip Hale's family line descended from Enoch Hale, the brother of patriot Nathan Hale, who was hanged as a spy by the British. The family males favored Harvard for higher education and leaned toward the respectable pursuits of the church and the world of letters.<sup>20</sup> The family was among the most

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<sup>20</sup> Biographical notes from the Sophia Smith Collection provide information about the frequent appearance of these two professions in the earliest generations of Hales in America.

revered in New England, and they received significant recognition at the turn of the century due to the public service and the many publications of Edward Everett Hale, Nancy Hale's paternal grandfather.

The family was distinguished, and Nancy Hale absorbed the wealth of stories and anecdotes she heard from Philip Hale, who acted as her personal link to family history. She sprinkles tales of family through her own writings. Despite the family's stature, the memoirs are warm and human. Nancy Hale records her mother's telling of a story about the formidable minister Edward Everett Hale:

“Do you remember that christening story your father used to tell about your grandfather?” she said. The old gentleman was getting deaf by that time, and the baby's mother had a lisp. “What's the name of this child?” he said. Even when he whispered his voice was enormous. “Luthy, thir,” the mother said. “Lucifer? Nonsense!” your grandfather rumbled. “John, I baptize thee...” And that, your father said, is how Lucy Perkins came to be christened John. (“A Good Light” 107)

Access to the Hale family history was provided to Nancy Hale through a stream of stories filled with Philip Hale's whimsical humor. It was the strength of his repartee which also made him a popular art instructor. He doted on his daughter, providing the consistently meaningful social interactions that shape a child's mind. Their conversations contributed to the wealth of family stories Nancy Hale recalled in her fiction as well as to her skill in writing them.<sup>21</sup> Nancy

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<sup>21</sup> Jane Healy, in her 1990 book *Endangered Minds: Why Our Children Don't Think*, stresses language as a crucial influence on thought processes: “Good language, like the synapses that make it possible, is gained only from interactive engagement: children need to talk as well as to hear” (88).

Hale's reflections on her childhood indicate a shared playfulness with her father. She recalls him arriving home to Dedham a village outside of Boston:

“Papa!” I would call, and in a few minutes his heavy, reassuring tread would come up the stairs, into my room, and around the corner of the wall to where I could see him, large, heavy, with a walrus mustache. After embraces, my father would sit down beside my bed to tell me stories. These fell, very loosely, into three categories, of which I was only faintly aware: the true stories, the legendary stories, and the stories that he simply made up as he went along because he was bored with the reality. I could generally tell, when his eyes held a glazed look and he began to hesitate and say “Aaaaah” between sentences, that he had taken off and was careering among the stars. (*New England Girlhood* 48)

Nancy Hale shared her memories of childhood through the highly descriptive fiction her inherited verbal abilities allowed her to create. Such accounts may be embellished for the pleasure of the audience, as her father's stories were for her own amusement, but the key elements speak of the reality of her life.<sup>22</sup> The delight at finding money in a secret compartment of a table and the mystery of a secret passage in a house (*A New England Girlhood* 155, 159) are among the thrilling childhood events described so vividly in the writings of Nancy Hale, the daughter of two artists. Hers is the Boston of the early twentieth century, filled with the mustiness of hansom cabs, the soot of train travel, the glitter of the Copley Plaza, and the fine food stuffs of S.S. Pierce. The inconsequential details of growing up in Boston become, in

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<sup>22</sup> The basis of Hale's stories in fact has been acknowledged by her son William Wertenbaker, her granddaughters Janelle Morton and Mary Welby von Thelen, and her friend Anne Freeman. Her correspondence relating to life events frequently confirms the overlap in life and art.

Nancy Hale's fiction, the material of an enchanted youth. Her ability to relate with an artist's eye for detail an extravagant repertoire of stories from her own life and her family's history, is the hallmark of her short story writing. In "The Readville Stars" she recalls her father picking her up from her crib to gaze at the glimmers beyond the window which she had mistaken for stars. They were not actually stars, but the lights from a "nearby slummy mill town." Unwilling to dispel her childish delight at the stars, he allows the myth to continue. Years later the Readville stars came to mean in her family "anything shining, exciting, glamorous" ("The Readville Stars" 41). She reflects finally after his death that her "father had really not been a gay man at all, but a retiring man who assumed ebullience to cheer himself up, and to get along in a world he had no instinct to overwhelm" ("The World, the Flesh, and the Devil" 42). Although Philip Hale was never as successful an artist as his wife, Nancy Hale wrote of her father, "He could have immortalized himself as a critic of art, but he thought nothing of writing—to his family writing came easy. He did immortalize himself as a teacher. But that was not what he wanted either" ("An Arrangement" 30). He wanted only to do his artwork and to be with his family, she recalls.

Philip Hale contributed to his daughter's education through his continuing interest in learning and his lively daily conversation. Nancy Hale acknowledges in "The World, the Flesh, and the Devil," "I seemed to remember everything my father ever said to me, as though I had inherited my repartee" (40).

Nancy Hale remembers her father's concern for her in the same story: "...I was well aware that my father would do anything I wanted. Once as we were walking along I was taken by a wild flower—a cardinal growing in a bog on the other side of the fence—and my father, in his clothes for going to town and his hard straw hat, lay down on his stomach on the tar



sidewalk, reached under the fence, and got it for me” (39). His delightful sense of fun and his love for his daughter were just part of Nancy Hale’s gifts from her father. Philip Hale, in particular, demonstrated the family’s dual abilities with visual art and text, which he also passed along. While he aspired to be a great painter—and he enjoyed moderate success in that area—he distinguished himself with words. Frederick Coburn, who with Ralph Hale edited Philip Hale’s book on Vermeer<sup>23</sup>, quotes in his introduction from Mr. Frank W. Buxton’s editorial article for *The Boston Herald* about Philip Hale: “His student days in Paris had added a touch of Gallic wit, lightness and kindness to the humour and solid intellectual qualities which had come down to him from a long line of distinguished ancestors. Humanity of any kind beguiled him, the pugilist and the baseball player being as attractive to him as an imposing figure of the pulpit or the laboratory” (Coburn xxi-xxii). The literary influence of his important father, Edward Everett Hale, is evident, but Philip Hale was more than just the product of that great paternal intellect. Buxton recalls, “What a jovial companion he was! He had read widely, seen much, and, like Walt Whitman and Francois Villon, he took huge delight in being alive and knowing others who shared the zest of living” (qtd. in Coburn xxii).

Nancy Hale’s father influenced her way of receiving the world around her; she learned from him to observe with eyes wide open and to relate her findings with the descriptive detail of an artist. Indeed, she followed graduation from the private Winsor School in Boston with two years of study at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts. She profited from her father’s instruction both in class and out, and she inherited his natural gift for written expression.

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<sup>23</sup> Philip Hale’s *Jan Vermeer of Delft* was first published in 1913. It was the first American work about the seventeenth century Dutch painter who proved so influential to the Boston artists. The work was revised and expanded after Hale’s death with the addition of the Appreciation by Coburn quoted here. It was published again in 1937.

Frederick Coburn describes Philip Hale's facility with language: "Mr. Hale wrote naturally and easily, as one of his family tradition should [....] He was averse to cultural pretence. He told with gusto the story of a fellow artist who when asked by other husky card-players in a railway smoker what business he was in replied quite truthfully, 'In the paint business.' Mr. Hale, in brief, was hostile by temperament and training to literary dilettantism" (xx-xxi). He had a great deal to say about art and life, and Hale injected his words with enthusiasm and a tremendous range of artistic knowledge.

Philip Hale's congenial nature was balanced by Lilian Hale's well developed sense of propriety which appeared to fuel her daughter's rebellion at the same time that it influenced Nancy Hale's personality. The typical rejection of the established views by society's youth took an unusual form in Nancy Hale's world. She wrote reflectively:

When one is young, rebellion is the need. Anything at all serves as the thing to reject – whatever lies closest to hand, which is likely to be parents [....]

Rebellion, in my adolescence, was complicated by the fact that, while my contemporaries were occupied in running away from conventionality, I was perforce running away *to* it. Nothing, I felt, could be more of an embarrassment than to have painter parents. ("An Arrangement" 27)

Although her parents behaved in a conservative fashion, Nancy Hale wished in her childhood that they had been more ordinary in their professions. The local acceptance that was hers by being born into a Brahmin family was tempered by her considerable discomfort at her parents' bohemian career choice. She describes them in a story as "...upstairs, snickering together the way they always did, at convention and the world's ways" ("An Arrangement" 31). Her school friends' fathers were involved typically in the world of finance, and they had achieved stature

even in socially conservative Boston. Before she was able to respect her parents' artistic and intellectual merits fully, she felt embarrassed by what others might think of them. In a *New Yorker* story, Nancy Hale provides a humorous example of her humiliation at her father's painting *en plein air*:

My father sat in full sun on a campstool, hunched over, in front of a sketching easel on which his canvas was secured. The kind of enormous oval palette he favored, with a bunch of brushes stuck in the hole, was over his thumb, and his boxes of paint tubes and turpentine and linseed-oil bottles lay spread open on the grass.

Just as I was approaching, my father stood up and, in full view of the Goodwins' house, the Sullivans' house, the Neffs' house, set his feet far apart and, leaning over, viewed his picture and the scene between his legs.

"Papa! Must you do that?" I said. I think of myself as dressed in a beige copy of a Chanel dress, a choker of oversized pearls around my neck and high heels; not such a slouch at the inappropriate myself.

"I've got to see what that tree by the stream looks like," he explained when he stood up straight again.

"It looks like a willow to me," I said.

"If a tree is any good, it ought to look as good upside down as right side up.

Better. Because you're not so dead used to it." ("An Arrangement" 27).

Nancy Hale rebelled against her artist parents through her social ambition to be a successful debutante, and she claimed to friends that her family was "stuffy" and restrictive in her upbringing, although she admitted, "...my parents, against whom I had every God-given

right to rebel, tended to giggle privately about my being the last word in stuffiness myself” (“An Arrangement” 28). Emerging from her parents’ quiet world and after considerable discomfort in school, Nancy Hale became a popular Boston debutante.

She married a dashing Southern aristocrat, Taylor Hardin, when she was only twenty. Hale’s choice of wedding gowns hinted at a new, self-confident urge for attention, and it marked her emergence from the necessity for conformity encouraged by Bostonian conservatism (figure 2). Newspaper accounts of her wedding in September of 1928, say that she “departed from the traditional bridal array” (“Miss Hale”), choosing pale pink velvet swathed around her head in a manner that a later husband claimed resembled a Red Cross nurse (von Thelen Interview 29 March). A news account was more positive: “The bride is well known for her selection of distinctive gowns, [...] and her wedding gown represented the very newest style for brides,” using a color which was popular in Europe during the past fashion season. The article recognizes Nancy Hale as a trend setter: “The makers of the gown believe it represents the initial appearance of an-other-than-white formal wedding gown in this country” (“Table Gossip”). Hale’s choice demonstrates her flight from Boston stodginess through her marriage.

Nancy Hale carried to New York a solid Puritan work ethic and a love of New England. The working woman image that Lilian Westcott Hale provided her daughter was an unusual one for the era. Nancy Hale writes of her mother’s dedication to art:

She met my father in Boston, where she went to study art. He was seventeen years older than she, a painter with fifteen years of training in the Paris ateliers<sup>24</sup>, and phenomenally learned in art and art history. He was the only man

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<sup>24</sup> This number may be an exaggeration on Hale’s part. Biographical sources place the figure closer to the decade used previously by this author.

who ever attracted her, for what she had been dreaming of, even when she was a little girl, was art. Art was to her so important that beside it clothes, parties, flirtations, even the idea of marriage, were trivial. (“My Mother’s Solitudes” 39)

Lilian Westcott combined her childhood dreams for a career in art with the traditional path of marriage. The mature Lilian Hale was intent upon meeting the world’s expectations as she attempted to fulfill her artistic ambition. She provided the role model for her only daughter of a working woman who prioritized her career despite Victorian notions which relegated women to the world of service as wife and mother. Her ambition allowed a career in New York to appear a natural choice to Nancy Hale after her own marriage.

Nancy Hale recalls her father as equally dedicated to his art: “My father almost never took a day off from his work. He did not stop for any holidays, except the engrossing rituals of Christmas; he did not stop for sickness[...]; he especially did not stop for Sunday, when all the pupils and models were out from underfoot and he could have his studio to himself” (“My Mother’s Solitudes” 39-40). His role as the breadwinner for the family curtailed the amount of time he was able to paint. Hale provided financial stability through teaching classes and writing about art, reflecting his family’s tradition for personal expression. For generations the Hales published the first daily newspaper in Boston, the *Boston Daily Advertiser*, one of the earliest papers to feature regular editorial columns. The Hale women were particularly noteworthy for their writing contributions during time periods which attempted to restrict their usefulness to the household. Nancy Hale took great pride in the Hale family’s accomplishments, both the men’s and the women’s, and she was brought up with the knowledge that women could perform at the same level as men. Her great aunts included Lucretia Peabody Hale, the author of *The Peterkin Papers*, and Harriet Beecher Stowe, whose *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* led Abraham Lincoln to

comment that she was the little woman who started the Civil War. Nancy Hale recalled in introducing *A New England Girlhood*, her response to her grandfather's *A New England Boyhood*, "I am told that when I was about to turn eight years old, my mother reported in some astonishment to my father—who was one of [Edward Everett] Hale's nine children—that I seemed to think I wanted a printing press for my birthday. 'Don't be alarmed,' he is supposed to have said. 'All Hale children ask for printing presses when they are eight'" (x). Nancy Hale began to publish a newspaper she called *Society Cat*. She informed the *Boston Herald* when she submitted a story for publication, that her goal was "remuneration" (Freeman, DLB 213). Hale benefited from the combined talents of visual artist and writer, and her confidence was greatly enhanced by membership in the Hale family. Reviewer Diana Loercher notes in her discussion of Nancy Hale's work about her parents called *The Life in the Studio* (figure 3), "Artists have grown like leaves on the family tree [...] Miss Hale was brought up to be a painter herself, and her first job was in the art department at Vogue. She claims that she didn't decide to become a writer but evolved into it and holds the theory that 'people who can do one art can usually do one or more of the others'" (22). As this examination shifts from biographical discussion to the works of Lilian Westcott Hale and her daughter, Nancy Hale, the visual and textual representations commingle in an artistic demonstration of their lives and the conflicts inherent in their eras. The combined work of the two women demonstrates, better than a photograph or a summary, what it meant to be a woman during the first half of the twentieth century. Lilian Hale accepted her world as she had been taught in her Victorian girlhood; Nancy Hale battled to resolve her New England upbringing with the modern freedoms she embraced as the world opened in many ways to women. Their art reveals the struggle of women adjusting to changing times.

## Part 2: Lilian Westcott Hale: The Victorian View

Lilian Hale toured Europe with her husband after completing her studies at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston in 1905, but unlike many artists of her stature during that time period, she did not study in Europe, forgoing that experience for marriage. Nightly critiques by Philip Hale may have been a worthwhile substitute for the experience that she missed. Philip Hale had studied in Europe, not the customary one or two years, but for a decade, largely in the Academie Julian and L'Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris.<sup>25</sup> He had already studied at the Museum School in Boston and at the New York Art Students' League before traveling abroad. Even after his return to Boston in 1892, Hale continued to summer with Monet's son-in-law Theodore Butler in Giverny (Hirshler, "Artists' Biographies" 210-211), where he acquired the techniques of the Impressionists, which challenged the strict standards of the Ecole des Beaux Arts. Hale began to teach in 1893 at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts that he had first attended. Bernice Leader links Boston's artistic homogeneity to the nearly universal association of local artists with the School of the Museum of Fine Arts.

The similarity in subject and style of the Boston artists, in addition to their connections with the Museum School, can be attributed to standards that they shared. The first was a belief that works of art should be creations of beauty and grace. An often repeated adage of the Boston school voiced the desire "to make it like," a phrase expressing the ideal that art should resemble

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<sup>25</sup> Hirshler writes of Philip Hale's decade of European study for Trevor Fairbrother's book, *The Bostonians: Painters of an Elegant Age, 1870-1930*. I rely upon her findings rather than the more casual remarks by Nancy Hale which credit Philip Hale with fifteen years in the art capitals of Europe.

its subject.<sup>26</sup> The Boston artist at the turn of the century was defined by that viewpoint and by an emphasis on draftsmanship and solid technique, which members of the Boston school felt were essential elements of good painting, and which distinguished the city's highly educated instructors above all others. Gammell wrote that the Boston artists during the first quarter of the twentieth century "represented the best-trained segment of the profession domiciled in America. By then they were surpassed by only a few isolated great figures in Europe..." (*Boston Painters* 2). Gammell recognizes the Bostonian defense of standards which were being challenged by the artists of New York and Philadelphia who, while competent, lacked the "thorough and comprehensive professional training" (2) of the Boston group. In a 2006 exhibition catalogue, *The Boston School Legacy*, Christopher Volpe traces Boston's artistic techniques back through generations, passed down from master to student. The highly respected instructors, of whom Philip Hale was one, inherited their classical tenets through study with the great European painters. Volpe links Boston's instructors to the mastery of David and Ingres, claiming that "No other distinct group of contemporary American painters can trace their lineage to so formidable a roster of European masters" (2).

Lilian Hale received the techniques of the masters from her Boston instructors. Fairbrother describes the local flavor of the Boston group's work at this time: "It is frequently apparent in the very nature of the paint: an application that is careful, gentle, and knowledgeable; restraint from effects of color or execution that destroy the harmony of the whole..."(77). Fairbrother notes of the period when Lilian Hale began painting in Boston at the

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<sup>26</sup> Gammell credits Edmund C. Tarbell particularly with the phrase which he says was read at Tarbell's funeral. Of the Boston school instructors, which included Philip Hale, Gammell says, Tarbell was considered to be the leader by the others who also considered him among the finest painters of his generation.



turn of the century that “The achievements of Boston painters after 1900 were significant, but they became increasingly unified and focused on their own local preferences. During a time of tremendous social, economic, and industrial change...Boston artists offered a renewed ideal of beauty, a conscious marriage of impressionist color, fine draftsmanship, and compositions inspired by the Old Masters” (64). In the early twentieth century, New York artists began to focus in their work on the world of the common man. Frances Pohl writes in *Framing America* that the Ashcan artists pursued a form of realism demonstrating the conflicts of urban life (304-312). Boston artists continued to pursue their artistic desire for beauty and conscientious technique (Fairbrother 64-65). From solid academic roots, both Lilian and Philip Hale experimented with stylistic and technical aspects of their artworks. In introduction to a reprinting of Philip Hale’s 1913 book, *Vermeer*, Frederick Coburn describes Philip Hale’s inventive nature as well as the academic intellect which directed it: “As a painter Mr. Hale experimented widely, exploring the technical possibilities of his art with acumen, sagacity and great professional skill [....] He was an earnest student of design and composition throughout his career.” While Hale scorned the modernist movement in art, Coburn remarks that “...he was nevertheless sympathetic with the intent of the professionally trained and discriminating modernists to tell their artistic story through what he used to call ‘purposive deformations of character’”(xix-xx).<sup>27</sup> Fairbrother writes that “Hale adopted a more extreme and experimental

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<sup>27</sup> Philip Hale called the emerging Ashcan school “the New York depressionists” (Leader footnote on page 6. As qtd. in Frederick W. Coburn’s “Philip L. Hale, Artist and Critic,” *World To-Day*, 14, 1908, 66). The opinion was shared within the Boston school, influencing another Boston painter Lilla Cabot Perry’s description of Matisse’s portrait of his wife, *The Green Line*: “It was supposed to be a beautiful example of some modern work. Well, all that I can say is that one cheek was bright grass green, the nose was a pea green, and the other cheek was a flaming vermilion...Now that sort of thing is as easy to paint as you can imagine. What is not easy is to paint good flesh color” (qtd. in Birmingham 32).

modern style” (58) than even the group known as The Ten.<sup>28</sup> Lilian Westcott Hale’s more subtle experimentation produced technically individual charcoal drawings, but she complained about the excess of experimental practice which rendered green faces in modernist paintings (Beebe). Nancy Hale wrote that Mary Cassatt, a woman in the predominantly male, experimental French Impressionist group, held the same view of the abstraction of modern art.<sup>29</sup> In the following passage, Hale describes Mary Cassatt’s encounter with the changing art style in 1908, when she was taken by Mrs. Montgomery Sears to the home of Gertrude Stein in Paris: “...after Mary met a number of Miss Stein’s and Leo’s friends and looked at their array of early Picassos and Matisse, she went back to Mrs. Sears expressing total rejection of her host and hostess. ‘I have never in my life seen so many dreadful paintings in one place,’ she said. ‘I have never seen so many dreadful people gathered together, and I want to be taken home’” (199).

Lilian Hale also disapproved of much of the art which did not seek to “make it like.” The Boston school continued to spurn New York’s artistic fascination with gritty realism, favoring instead the search for new ways to create beauty.<sup>30</sup> This artistic opinion sheltered Lilian Hale’s experimental technique within its conservative goals. Her life view, as described by daughter Nancy in *The Life in the Studio*, parallels her artistic innovation:

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<sup>28</sup> Fairbrother points out that Hale was not a part of the splinter group known as The Ten, because he was not elected to the Society of American Artists from which the ten American Impressionists withdrew in 1898 (58). He notes that “Hale was characterized as an extremist of the impressionist movement and not taken very seriously” (59).

<sup>29</sup> After the publication of *The Life in the Studio*, her memoir of her two artist parents, Nancy Hale was asked to write a biography of Cassatt. The work, *Mary Cassatt*, which involved years of research on Hale’s part, was published in 1975.

<sup>30</sup> Fairbrother notes this tendency in both the pictures of women and in the interiors created by the Boston school of artists (77).

...she pitied people who were so unimaginative they could no longer see the style in a garment temporarily out of fashion. She gently pitied people so sheeplike as to be impressed by a label, and people who hadn't the taste to rearrange clothes to suit their own style—who were, for that matter, unable to develop a style of their own. All these years it had not been that she was too conservative or too economical or too Bostonian to keep buying new clothes, and keep throwing out the old ones; it was because she thought it boring—tiresome would have been her word—docilely to buy what you were told, and get rid of what you still liked.

(80)

In her life and in her art, Lilian Westcott Hale made choices. She notes in her diary that “Van Gogh said all artists are always seeking without absolutely finding—the contrary of ‘I know it, I have found it.’ When I say I’m an artist I mean, I am seeking, striving, I am in it with all my heart” (SSC, HFP, 94.18). Her dedication is demonstrated in three separate genres of work, all of which bear reflecting upon in regard to gender and their variations from other artists of the same period.

Despite critics’ claims of Boston’s artistic ultra-conservatism, the Hales and many significant Boston artists of the period experimented with form and technique in their work. Gammell describes the salient identification with New England of the art produced by the group: “It is all the more remarkable that its pictorial fruitage should smack of New England as characteristically as baked beans and codfish cakes for Sunday breakfast. Posterity is likely to discover in this marked local savor the additional charm of evoked bygone time and place which permeates the work of the seventeenth-century Dutchmen or the rococo art of Watteau and his disciples” (*Boston Painters* 33).

Lilian Westcott Hale's skill and technique are clear indications of her academic training within the Boston school. Her work, at the same time, demonstrates an individual style. Some of her subjects reflect Boston tradition, while others are uniquely her own. The drawings and paintings are divided here into three categories: still lifes and landscapes, idealized women, and portraits and figure studies. All of these genres of Hale's art demonstrate the position of women in her world.

## Still Lifes and Landscapes

Lilian Hale never stepped outside the range of gender appropriate forms in her work, while she avoided some areas relegated to women only, such as china painting. When she wrote to her mother of her desire to become a portrait painter, she was selecting what she felt, at the turn of the century, was the highest aspiration practical for a woman artist. Still lifes had been popular with women artists for generations, largely because of their inferior position in the spectrum of art genres. Frances Pohl, discussing art in terms of social history, allows that it is unsurprising “that women found an accepted place as still-life painters, for the home or domestic sphere was their acknowledged realm” (175). Such works were an appropriate choice for women artists because women were so often limited in their work space at home, and the domestic subject matter was readily available (Hirshler, *A Studio of Her Own* 67). Nonetheless, Pohl notes that the leading still-life painters of the nineteenth century were male.

The still lifes created in Boston during Lilian Hale’s period frequently featured either rich floral arrangements or domestic objects. Elizabeth Vaughan Okie Paxton, the talented wife of another instructor at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, was particularly recognized for her still lifes. Like other Boston artists, she focused on simple domestic images like the items on a kitchen table, or on more elegant arrangements which demonstrated the era’s preference for porcelain objects, frequently with an Oriental flavor. While Lilian Hale also produced a number of still lifes, her individual approach is demonstrated by inventive conceptual design and an unconventional choice of objects. The Boston school’s adoption of floral paintings from European roots was unsurprising, but Hale’s approach varied from the traditional vase of colorful blooms. While she used flowers frequently in her paintings, they were rarely the focus of her work. When she did concentrate on a vase, it was intrinsically different from the traditional

image of beauty, a variation which will be examined. Likewise, Hale's landscape drawings are consistent within her oeuvre, but they also demonstrate a singular and elegant method of presenting the world around her. As with the other two genres which follow the discussion of still lifes and landscapes, Lilian Hale's perception of the surrounding world is clearly a woman's view.

Lilian Hale's drawings demonstrate her great skill, show her ability to develop personal technique, and provide her most significant contribution to the art world. Hirshler recounts that Hale's first solo show in Boston at the Rowlands Galleries in 1908, when she was pregnant with her daughter, garnered uniform praise for her skills. She chose to show only her drawings because time would not allow her to ready a significant number of paintings. The responses to the exhibit, noted by Hirshler, include the opinions of both instructors and fellow artists. All but three of the drawings were purchased, and the fact that so many were selected for the collections of other artists is high praise for Hale's abilities. Edmund Tarbell who had instructed Lilian Hale, purchased one drawing and said that her work should be placed in the company of " '...our old friends Leonardo, Holbein and Ingres, and are to me the finest modern drawings I have ever seen'" (qtd. in Hirshler, "*Drawn with Butterfly's Wings*" 10). Vinton, another Museum School instructor, wrote to Hale about the show: " 'Nothing more beautiful, tender, exquisite, and true, as drawing, has ever been shown in Boston within my remembrance—of forty years or more'" (qtd. in Hirshler, "*Drawn with Butterfly's Wings*" 10). Other praise for Lilian Hale's drawings over the ensuing years reinforced the tremendous accolades from her first show, which exposed her to the Boston art world in a manner that predicted her future as a professional.

The delicate images wrought by Hale's finely sharpened sticks of charcoal provide views of the surrounding world which speak to her awareness of her own position in life. There was

never any question of the importance of art to her world, and Lilian Westcott Hale set up her studio at home in the Boston suburb of Dedham where there also could be no question of her Victorian devotion to the ideals of family and motherhood, which shaped her thinking and her life. While Lilian Hale appreciated her sister-in-law's advice and her husband's critiques, she worked alone in the confines of her Dedham home, and the group of drawings to be examined first demonstrates the singular style which she developed there. The first drawing (figure 4) is unusual in its subject matter and its composition which juxtaposes the model of a boat within against a church steeple beyond the window, demonstrating Hale's frequent melding of still life and landscape. Art critic Rose Berry is unstinting in her praise of Hale's draftsmanship, writing in 1927, "By many, Mrs. Hale is considered one of the best American painters [...] But, in her drawing it is safe to say that she is without a rival. The delicacy of her black and white is indescribable; the whiteness of the white and the paleness of the gray are notable always, but the subtlety of the two as they become one, tests the eye ..." (67). Berry contends that the measure of the true artist lies in the drawing, and in this, she claims, Hale has no equal.

Lilian Hale drew her subject matter from the domestic world and its surroundings, seen through the windows of her home. In a diary entry (figure 5) entitled "things I like," she explores a wealth of sensate pleasures: "May day under blooming apple tree with no noise but bees, smell of gingerbread fresh out of the oven [...] listening to symphonic music by Brahms," viewing a beautiful church, and an addition near the bottom of the page of "a violent snow storm with wind & a piece of Strathmore board and charcoal." Beneath that entry Hale has clipped and mounted a section of a sonnet by Elinor Wylie:

Down in the Puritan marrow of my bones

There's something in this richness that I hate,

I love the look, austere, immaculate,

Of landscapes drawn in pearly monotones” (SSC, HFP, 94.18).

The words describe some of Hale’s finest works. She produced, over many years, snowy scenes of the New England landscape outside her windows. The snow scene in figure 6 is a tonal study, demonstrating the wide range of shading the artist was able to achieve from finely sharpened charcoal. The snow is an expanse of white, while the column is shaded slightly, vertically cutting the picture plane, a device used by Hale in figure studies as well. The darkest strokes create the bush in the foreground, contrasting with the snowy background and the heavy clumps of white resting on its bulk. The next scene (figure 7) also relies on the balance between dark figures and snow, as does *Snow with Berries*, also called *Buckthorn* (figure 8). The snow affords Hale the whiteness to play off of in creating her shading. She achieves the same considered tonal effects in figure studies like *The Old Ring Box* (figure 9) which will be examined later. Nancy Hale recalls her mother creating the snow scenes in a story published in *The New Yorker*: “These drawings were among the most sought-after examples of her work. On bitter, blizzardy winter mornings when my father and I would leave the house to walk to the village, a mile away, he to the train and I to school, he would remark, ‘Well, there’s one comfort. She’ll get something wonderful out of this’” (“Eyes and No Eyes” 52).

To create the distinctive wintry scenes, Lilian Hale developed a method using finely sharpened charcoal to put down the dark impressions in predominantly vertical lines. Ives Gammell wrote of her skill, “Mrs. Hale’s extraordinary mastery of the charcoal medium enabled her to evolve an art form which she made exclusively her own. The material which provided man with his primitive means of pictorial self-expression became, in her hands, an instrument susceptible of communicating the most sophisticated visual impressions with unparalleled



finesse” (“Appreciation” 18). Gammell highlights Hale’s use of a traditional medium, which in her hands, becomes anything but dated. Hirshler writes of Lilian Hale’s pictures: “they are cool, detached, and elegant, containing little of the sentimental sweetness found in the figurative works of many of her Boston colleagues (“Lilian Westcott Hale” 114). Hale’s refined still-life technique is innovative yet subtle, and Hirshler points out that it blends individuality with tradition. Hirshler refers to Lilian Hale as an “experimental still-life artist, developing an unusual and quite modern compositional format...” (“*Drawn with Butterfly’s Wings*” 17-18).

Hale demonstrated her appreciation for traditional technique along with her artistic individuality in *The Dinosaurs* (figure 10). This image may have originated with a list which appeared in her journal under the heading “Subjects for drawings.” The items include “Bas relief with gourd vine tacked over & about it by pins. Patti Pans. Khol Rhabi” (SSC, HFP, 94.18), all of which indicate an interest in free-shaped garden-grown items. The drawing of *The Dinosaurs* is one of quiet majesty, simple in subject and detailed in technique. At the beginning of the twentieth century in Boston, as already mentioned, beauty was glorified and idealized. Lilian Hale found beauty in the graceful shape of gourds. *The Dinosaurs* demonstrates again Hale’s blending of the domestic world with the outside world. From her protected position within the home, she sketched gourds which took on the form of prehistoric creatures, hence the name. Hale placed the gourds on the windowsill, as close to the outside as possible. Although she was traditional in her approach to her art, she experimented with space.

Griselda Pollock’s essay “Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity” discusses the use of space in art. Women artists center their works in private, interior spaces like bedrooms, drawing rooms, and if outside, in private and restricted areas. While Pollock confines the demonstration of her ideas largely to the works of Cassatt and Morisot, her discussion applies to more than just

the Impressionist women painters. Pollock notes that Morisot's compositions allow "the juxtaposition on a single canvas of two spatial systems—or at least of two compartments of space often obviously boundaried by some device such as a balustrade, balcony, veranda or embankment" (81). Lilian Hale, too, was a master of this creation of two spatial systems in a single work as she showed in *The Dinosaurs* with the same division of the drawing into compartments that Pollock describes in Morisot's work: "What Morisot's balustrades [or Hale's windows] demarcate is not the boundary between public and private but between the spaces of masculinity and of femininity inscribed at the level of both what spaces are open to men and women and what relation a man or woman has to that space and its occupants" (86-87). The drapery which hangs to the right in *The Dinosaurs* proclaims the division between the interior world of the woman/artist and the outside world from which she is sheltered, the man's world. The tree on the left balances, through its natural shape beyond the window, the dark drapery on the right, reflective of the balance which Hale creates in her own life. Beyond the window is a snow-covered world. The cold and quiet stillness is characteristic of Hale's work. Delicate strokes of charcoal shape the various textures of the drawing, gently in the gourds and the snow, and with rougher cross-hatching in the drapery barrier. The already-mentioned list in Hale's diary of "Subjects for drawings" includes an item which she describes briefly as "Mullen house in snow with piece of flowered curtain" (SSC, HFP, 94.18). The description incorporates the snow scenes which are characteristic backdrops for Hale, as well as the frequent focus of a house beyond her window. The inclusion of the curtain in the very brief description of the scene reflects its significance to the composition by providing the barrier between the outside and the inside worlds.

Hale's most frequent spatial manipulations involved the use of a window with the images before it and beyond it. Hirshler comments that "Hale's still lifes most often represent objects arranged on a windowsill, a device that allowed her to combine still life and landscape in a single image and to eliminate the boundaries between inside and the outside world" ("*Drawn with Butterfly's Wings*" 18). The elimination of the division between indoors and outdoors is apparent in the particularly intriguing snowscape in figure 11. *White Teapot* (1934) offers no structural hint of a window even though it clearly merges a house interior with its domestications of tablecloth, teapot, and cup, with the snow scene beyond. Hirshler notes the teapot spout's mimicking of the tree branches, joining the refined and the natural worlds.

With *On Christmas Day in the Morning* (figure 12), completed in 1924, Hale approached the positioning of the domestic world of the woman against the greater world beyond in a different manner.<sup>31</sup> A wreath hangs in front of a window bordered on one side with ivy. Hale uses the window to demarcate the woman's domestic world and the space beyond. Rather than eliminating the division, drawings like *On Christmas Day in the Morning* call attention to the barrier and the very separate worlds it divides. The drawing details the cozy interior with its vase of ivy, teapot, and wreath, all demonstrations of domestic harmony and protection. Outside, again, lies the cold, snowy stillness of the natural world. The approach is different from *White Teapot* which merges inside and outside. *On Christmas Day in the Morning* emphasizes a binary opposition of the interior world and the world beyond the window.

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<sup>31</sup> Early American literature used wooded areas to represent the home of evil and forbidden vices. Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* is a particularly convincing example of this tendency, with Hester Prynne's meeting with the minister occurring in the woods, and her home's location beyond the town at the edge of the woods.

Hale repeatedly returned in her compositions to the window as a separation of the two spaces (figure 13). She created her artwork inside her home, avoiding undue publicity for her dual role of artist and mother. She highlighted the window barrier through which she gazed, and she defined her space as clearly within its border. Certainly, Lilian Hale suffered no true confinement in her home. She was an avid gardener, about which Nancy Hale wrote in “Inheriting a Garden:”

...very often when she had finished her morning’s painting she used to spend the rest of the summer day gardening in an old striped seersucker dress, her feet in torn, discarded espadrilles of mine, a bandanna faded pale red tying her hair down, with her deplorable jaw set as she dug out dandelions and sorrel. Her gardening was unsparing. During droughts, she carried water in a pail, since the town forbade sprinkling or even, in extremities, any use of the hose at all; she sawed off dead limbs, forked over the compost heap, nailed up high gray driftwood supports for the roses to clamber over.

“Come and help me!” she used to cry, though not so often after years of my making it plain I did not want to.

I had in mind more sybaritic summers, like the picture in *Vogue*. “Why don’t we let it all run to lovely field grass?” I said.

A look of passionate distress twisted her features—stained with sweat, streaked with dirt where she’d slapped a mosquito, but still, like an old statue’s, beautiful.

“It wouldn’t be the way you imagine,” she said. “Nature can’t just be left, like that.”

The standard for her gardening afternoons was the same as for her painting mornings—quite simply, perfection. (112)

In “Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity,” Pollock lists private gardens as one of the spaces represented by women in art (78). Hale did paint her garden, as shown in *An Old Cherry Tree* (figure 14), from a position which might have been indoors. Of more importance than the artist’s position, though, is the indication of the garden as a private and protected space—as separate from the busy working world as a domestic interior. The painting demarcates with a garden fence, a protected area of lawn. Civilization is indicated through the path of stepping stones ending at the garden’s boundary. In *Garden in Dedham* (figure 15), a doll rests on the bench and a wicker pram sits in the foreground, indications of a child that the viewer does not see. Of particular interest is the expansive pergola which clearly defines the protected garden area as separate from the bigger and less controlled world beyond, indicated by the large trees (SSC, HFP, 97.6). Hale’s avocation of gardening proves that she did not spend all of her time indoors, but her garden landscapes indicate her restricted position as a woman.

The majority of Hale’s still life and landscape compositions were drawn from within the home; they are hauntingly lonely. Hale blended objects inside with the cold and snowy world beyond the window. The wall, the window, and in the case of drawings like *The Dinosaurs* (figure 10), the dark drapery, all separated the artist’s studio from the world outside. In some cases Lilian Hale employed a double barrier, which will be noted again later in the section on idealized images of women. *The Dinosaurs* contained the double barrier of the window and the scalloped chain boundary outside. These signified a restriction which was entirely a function of gender. A woman’s place was in the home, and every scene that Lilian Westcott Hale drew from

within the walls of her home looking out, pointed to her awareness of the restrictive window as much more than a fragile piece of glass.

Her world balanced expectations and personal desire. The surrounding society provided the expectations, which the artist fulfilled as she created her art. Lilian Hale worked within the home, but she gazed out on the world beyond in her drawings, unlike what Hirshler describes as “the more traditional still-life formula employed by most of her Boston colleagues, who favored dark, elegant tabletop compositions” (“*Drawn with Butterfly’s Wings*” 18). Hale called attention to her own social confinement. The cultural standards controlling art and life were definitive in shaping both the artist and her artwork. In her scenes through the windows that surround her, Lilian Westcott Hale traveled beyond the inner sanctity of her place in the home, yet she was unable to become a part of the world. She watched it from the protection of her domesticity.

Landscapes had never been as significant proportionally in Boston as in other art centers, but both of the Hales produced them. The differences between Lilian Hale’s views beyond the windows of her home and the Impressionist landscapes of Philip Hale are worthy of note. Philip Hale’s scenes of the outdoors demonstrate the *plein air* approach that he learned while painting in Giverny in the late nineteenth century. He often included women as objects of beauty, subject matter which will be covered in the next section. Philip Hale’s outdoor scenes, like *The Water’s Edge* (figure 16), continue to be the most sought after of his works, which do not divide quite as conveniently into genre groups as Lilian Hale’s. His graceful and sun-filled scenes of beauty incorporate the Impressionist’s significant attention to light. *Girls in Sunlight* (figure 17) demonstrates Hale’s effort to capture sunlight on canvas.

As mentioned earlier, Lilian Hale’s landscapes were executed, for the most part, from within the house in Dedham, looking out on one of the views available from various windows.

They were more often drawn than painted, and Lilian Hale replaced her husband's images of sunlight and greenery with the cold whiteness of New England winters. They are stark and technical. Hale depicts the confined world of women. The Victorian constraint evident in Hale's images expands with the figure paintings to be examined next. Lilian Hale's snow scenes and still lifes provide a reserved statement about the woman's position in early twentieth-century America. Woman was domestically positioned, and from her viewpoint within the home, she looked out onto the world. The various levels of freedom of household members dictated the roles that they played. Certainly the men of the period experienced more freedom than the women, yet that freedom brought with it a great responsibility, which the males undoubtedly felt sharply in their usual role of sole-provider. Lilian Westcott Hale's drawings of the outdoors demonstrated her great individuality as an artist, while indicating a perception of her confined world. Ives Gammell stresses that Lilian Hale's seclusion did not restrict her artistic skill which surpassed her husband's. He also indicates the social expectation for women to maintain a subordinate position when he writes of the couple, "Thus we come face to face with the crowning paradox of the remarkable artistic phenomenon we are reviewing. This deceptively hybrid art, suscitated by the conjunction of a secondary painter's intellect and the pictorial flair of a compliant feminine sensibility, turned out to be one of the most individualistic manifestations of traditional painting to emerge in our century" ("Appreciation" 16). Despite Gammell's admiration for her work, he considers Lilian Hale's art as a joint effort between a secondary painter and a compliant female, her husband and herself. The passage fails to credit Lilian Hale's artistic capabilities or her judgment in discerning what critical assessments to heed. Like the drooping flower of figure 18, named Bleeding Heart, which also appropriately entitles

the artwork, Lilian Hale resigned herself to confinement, struggling to grow artistically in a narrow world.

*Bleeding Heart* and one last image in this group demonstrate Hale's unique floral studies, while speaking to the female position. Figure 19 depicts the same view from the house as figure 7 with the addition of a vase on the windowsill inside. Here Hale has called attention, once again, to the world within divided from the world beyond the home. The two worlds appear to be in a naturalistic form of communication; the flower bends and twists inside as the trees do beyond the window. It appears that only the window prevents the plant inside from entwining with the trees beyond the glass. The outside world is cold with ice and snow, frozen and dead; the flower inside lives and retains a few blooms. This is the woman's world—protected. Lilian Westcott Hale acknowledged the security of the home, even as she recognized the barrier between the male's and the female's spaces. After her mother's death, Nancy Hale described with complete understanding the images her mother created:

As I drew out each sheet of Strathmore board, propped it against a chair, and viewed it, all the pictures seemed to have taken on a curious new dimension that at first baffled me.

Here was the shed behind our house in Dedham. Tortuous black branches on which a few black berries cling are shown in relation to its slanting, white-laden roof, the whole vignette on the white paper so that the scene seems drowned in winter. Here was the house across the road seen from the windows of our upstairs hall. Upon the boughs of the hemlock on the front lawn, bent down by snow, snow is still falling; but inside the window in the foreground, blossoms of a



bowl of freesias are touched faintly with sanguine chalk, giving a sense at once of inwardness and of warmth. ("The Other Side" 82)

## Idealized Images of Women

Bernice Leader has documented the Boston artists' preoccupation at the turn of the century with images of beautiful women in the home, when women were actually increasing their public roles. Bailey Van Hook has furthered the discussion of the idealized images, placing them in an international perspective. Both writers included Lilian Westcott Hale in the context of that genre. This closer look at Hale's idealized women indicates not only what the images reveal about the period, but why Hale drew and painted them, and how she felt about them. Boston artists produced a larger number of figure studies than the artists of other art centers<sup>32</sup> in the decades on either side of the turn of the century. Van Hook focuses on the images of women in art, identifying them as decorative objects, reflecting the era's obsession with leisure time as an acknowledgment of social position. The women appear in the art in a restful state or performing tasks other than those essential to running a household. They are objects of languor, protected from the increasing pace of the surrounding world ("Decorative Images" 59-60).

Hale's idealized women are consistently fine examples of the period's taste, and *Lavender and Old Ivory* (figure 20) is an appropriate painting to examine first because it possesses so many characteristics of the type. A graceful woman, an object of great beauty herself, stands before a fireplace, a frequent device for Hale. The model is dressed in a delicate, draping gown, and every detail of her presence is graceful and refined. She gently touches the bloom on a tall branch of flowers in an urn in front of the fireplace. She holds a basket which appears also to contain flowers, and another basket of blooming tulips rests on a table. The

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<sup>32</sup> Leader quotes Philip Hale's comments here about Boston exhibitions' focus on the figure as opposed to the general profusion of landscapes at shows during the same period in other cities (4).

figure is isolated from the cares of the outside world in her beautiful environment. The room is filled with objects of simple comfort. Hirshler notes in this and many of Lilian Hale's works that, like Tarbell, Hale "... banished Victorian opulence in favor of the simplicity and moral rectitude of the colonial revival" ("*Drawn with Butterfly's Wings*" 13). Despite the lack of excessive adornment, the home is decorated in a fashion which confirms respectability through the abundance of unnecessary items of pleasure. In the background is an Oriental wall hanging; such exotic objects were a favorite of Boston artists. Over the mantle hangs a mourning piece in needlework for Oliver Everett, Philip Hale's ancestor. The work appears in several of Lilian Westcott Hale's paintings; it is a tribute to convention while also demonstrating the skill of needlework, an acceptable pastime for women in the home.

*Lavender and Old Ivory* is one of many idealized women produced by Lilian Hale in the early twentieth century. Leader and van Hook's discussions examine the sources for these idealized images, identifying roots in both European and American art. The instructors at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, as already stated, received their training from European masters, and Paris was the most frequented European capitol for instruction. Those artists returned to America with the ideas and the techniques of a different culture, one which glorified the beauty of the nude female form. While most of their lessons became a part of the American system of instruction, a notable difference was caused by the American view of French art as immoral, prompting the effort to sublimate its erotic elements (van Hook, *Angels* 44).

The American artists painted the female figure as their European instructors had, but their ideals were different. Van Hook explains that purity was one of the most American of qualities in art, emerging perhaps from the public's negative feeling toward the lascivious nature of

French art (*Angels of Art* 12). Van Hook cites the large number of amazons in English art and Venuses in French art, which “did not signify that contemporary women had extensive influence in their respective societies. Instead, these images must be considered as masculine wish fulfillment, where women functioned as objects of aesthetic and sensual pleasure” (*Angels of Art* 18). American women were considered morally superior to men and were expected to exert a positive influence. Despite an inferior social position, women were the cultural arbiters of taste. Women protected society from immorality even as they were believed to require male protection from corrupting elements. Consequently, Van Hook notes, “The American artists, despite their European study, created the pure white virgin but seldom her shadowy sister—the darkly alluring, sinister, castrating femmes fatales so popular with Symbolist artists at the *fin de siècle*” (“Milk White” 26). Van Hook describes just how the preference for the paintings evolved in America: “...men were perceived in terms of action; thus, it was less possible for male figures to be decorative and passive than female figures. The dominant ideology of separate spheres granted men an active function outside the home in business and industry, government and politics, and exploration and conquest, while women reigned over the home and cultural activities” (“Decorative Images” 58). The woman’s place was protected from the energy and tension of the male arena.

The high moral standards in Boston influenced the area’s failure to adopt French art’s obsession with the voluptuous and often erotic nude. Leader’s analysis of turn of the century art in Boston recognizes the forceful early influences on American character: “Despite the academic emphasis on the study of the nude in the late nineteenth century, there was a Puritanical heritage that caused Americans to suspect that the nude was indecent and immoral and possibly promoting sensual gratification instead of moral elevation” (85). A lack of interest

in the nude was experienced in other parts of the country as well,<sup>33</sup> but nowhere was Puritanical ideology more firmly ingrained in the moral framework of society than in Boston. The creation of the chaste and pure woman, the idealized woman, was an embodiment of the contrast between Parisian and Bostonian art, but not, Bailey Van Hook points out “...simply one of cosmopolitan lewdness vs. Puritan modesty, but of symbolic evil vs. symbolic good” (“Milk White” 26). In Boston, “They painted delicate not voluptuous types and made the expressions sweet not coy, the gestures modest not inviting, and the poses dainty not assertive” (Van Hook, “Milk White” 23).

Women as beautiful objects continued to play a role in the art produced in Boston well into the twentieth century, after they had faded in popularity elsewhere, contributing to critical interpretation of Boston’s art scene as stagnant. While Boston had been recognized before the turn of the century as a progressive art capital, popular historian Van Wyck Brooks labeled the fall from this cultural position, which occurred around the turn of the century, as New England’s Indian summer.<sup>34</sup> The change was brought not by instability, but by the sense of security Boston felt in its elevated cultural position. The Boston art world became comfortable with trying to do its work better, focusing on technique and style and experimenting little with subject matter, creating one beautiful image after another.

Even as the American woman struggled to emerge from her Victorian cocoon, the conservative Boston audience appeared intent on maintaining the image of bourgeois feminine refinement. Turn-of-the-century Boston’s elevated moral standards shaped public preferences in

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<sup>33</sup> See Frances K. Pohl’s *Framing America*, for an account of a 1906 raid on a New York art publication because of its nude illustrations, 270-271.

<sup>34</sup> See Brooks’s book on the subject, *New England: Indian Summer 1865-1915*. New York 1940, 408-411.

both art and literature. The term “banned in Boston” branded a book beneath the standards of acceptability within that rigid code of moral conduct, as well as, many would say, ensuring its literary success.<sup>35</sup> Leader points out that artworks were censored just as heavily as literature and for similar reasons of morality (84): “Like the literature of the genteel tradition, the Boston paintings display a remarkable sexual reticence. There are no hints of sexual attraction between men and women, and women are idealized as morally superior, pure, and lacking in sexual desire” (Leader 86). Lilian Westcott Hale did not paint men and women on the same canvas, and while the women in her art are objects of beauty, they are not overtly sexual. Her Victorian upbringing, which avoided the mere mention of sexuality, endorsed clothing that covered and constricted, and accepted strict social rules defining right and wrong. The works of beauty created by the Boston artists ultimately came to be regarded as anti-feminist and repetitious, but the artists who produced them at the time were intent upon avoiding “the unattractive elements of society” (Van Hook, “Milk White” 27).

Trevor Fairbrother, in a discussion of the many paintings of women in their gracious worlds by the Boston school, agrees with the critical opinion about such pieces: “...scholars have discussed Boston’s paintings of interiors as ‘anti-feminist’ expressions, promoting the view that women are merely ‘beautiful things.’ This is true in the sense that these artists inevitably reflected a dominant cultural ideal of their period that privileged women should be decorative, ladylike, and seemingly free from responsibility” (77). Fairbrother notes a transition in Boston

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<sup>35</sup> Mark Twain was pleased to learn that *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* had been banned in Boston, understanding that the slight would boost sales. Surprisingly his hundreds of uses of the word “nigger” in the text had nothing to do with the banning, since Boston was widely fearful of groups felt to be inferior at the time. The insult involved Huck’s spitting, cussing, smoking, drinking and playing hooky, which labeled him a poor role model for America’s youth. Of course, Mark Twain had not intended the tale for a young audience.

that had taken place, from cosmopolitanism in the late nineteenth century, to what he refers to as “...the codified, single-minded conventionalism that had come to the fore by the 1910s” (77). The American images of the idealized women in art were a logical outgrowth of the Victorian era and may have been, as a result, pleasing at the turn of the century to young artists of proper upbringing like Lilian Westcott Hale.

The idealized images of women were not portraits, but rather, *decorative* works. Van Hook defines the term in “Decorative Images of American Women: The Aristocratic Aesthetic of the Late Nineteenth Century” as “...an arrangement of form, line, and color constructed primarily for an aesthetic and harmonious effect [...which] invariably contained female figures...” (45). Van Hook ties the artistic ideology of the Boston artists with their obsession for beauty to the gender perceptions of the period in explaining the popularity of the decorative images: “...women in turn of the century American painting occupied a realm that was defined as ‘ideal,’ [...] considered against the ‘real’ world that was defined as masculine” (Introduction, *Angels* 13).

Writings of the time period indicate, however, that the idealized women in Boston’s art bear little resemblance to the actual women of the city. William Vance in his essay “Redefining Boston” describes the strength of the true “Boston woman” as opposed to her soft, ethereal image in art. In reality, her attributes of purity, breeding, and control combine with a cold manner, considerable abilities, and integrity. Nancy Hale wrote that “...especially in Boston, there were many of what Henry James called Mighty Maidens...” (“Joyous Gard” 175). Ellen Day Hale’s self-portrait of 1885 (figure 21), with its direct gaze, exhibits much of the energy and strength generally attributed to the women of Boston. An equally unusual piece for the period, Ellen Day Hale’s *Morning News* (figure 22) was painted in 1905 and demonstrates Impressionist

influence in the pastel hues that she often used. The tea service behind the subject reflects traditional domesticity, but the woman reads a newspaper, a clear indication that she is worldly and informed. Leader's investigation of Boston artists' views of women concludes that "Despite the artists' goal of 'making it like,' their paintings were, in many respects, not very 'like'" (339-340). The Boston woman of that era, as acknowledged by Leader, was not the demure vision of femininity and gentility that the artworks present, but rather, a strong and vibrant persona whose independent and public spirit continually expanded to new arenas<sup>36</sup> (340). She describes the difference, noting that the images

...do not conform to contemporary observations about American women in fact or in fiction. Boston women, in particular, were observed to be extremely independent, active, and involved outside the home in professional employment, literary clubs, philanthropic organizations, and reform movements, including women's suffrage. The paintings, however, depict remote, silent, solitary women engaged in quiet activities in their own homes. (56-57)

In the sense described by Leader, Lilian Hale's depictions of idealized women built upon the gender division already established in the previous discussion of landscapes, of the woman artist as isolated and disconnected from the outside world.

Hale's idealized images displayed tendencies which were pervasive among the Boston school of artists, yet they included her own specific elements, which will be noted. Women in art have appeared at various times as full-figured and Rubenesque, or trim and athletic, fair or dark, serious or frivolous, depending upon their period and location, for they were a form of

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<sup>36</sup> An additional description of the Boston woman forms a portion (23-27) of William L. Vance's essay, "Redefining 'Bostonian,'" in Trevor Fairbrother's 1986 book *The Bostonians: Painters of an Elegant Age, 1870-1930*.



wish-fulfillment for the viewer. At the turn of the century, Charles Dana Gibson had introduced the Gibson girl to a receptive public. That image was trim, lovely, and desirable. Banta recognizes the success of Gibson's popular image as occurring because it posed no threat to society and "served as a useful substitute for longings" (214). The Boston art-buying public determined what art images conformed to its conservative expectations based upon guidelines of acceptability shaped by social ideals. Feminist Linda Nochlin points out, however, that women cannot be seen "...as a fixed, pre-existing entity or 'image,' transformed by this or that historical circumstance, but as a complex, mercurial and problematic signifier, mixed in its messages, resisting fixed interpretation or positioning despite the numerous attempts made in visual representation literally to put 'woman' in her place" (*Representing Women* 35). That place, Pollock demonstrates in "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," is for women within the home, as dictated by gender. Many Boston artists created idealized images of women employed at domestic chores, generally tasks which brought pleasure to them. Museum School instructor William Paxton's *Girl Arranging Flowers* (figure 23) and his *Tea Leaves* (figure 24) both rely for subject matter on obviously well-to-do women filling their lives with the beauty of flowers and serving tea after the women have spent the time required to make themselves beautiful. Women are also depicted at pleasurable pursuits like needlework or playing instruments. *Lady at Spinet* (SSC, HFP, 97.6) is an example by Lilian Hale of such images (figure 25). The men who support the women's lifestyles are rarely depicted, although Paxton's painting *The Breakfast* is a noteworthy exception (figure 26). That scene of the young couple at table, waited on by the crisp and quiet servant, shows the mistress of the house in a gracious pose, calmly gazing, doing nothing, while her husband reads the newspaper, a demonstration of his active participation in the world, which provides her freedom from responsibility.

Lilian Westcott Hale's charcoal *The Old Ring Box* (figure 9) demonstrates the Bostonian preference for women of leisure, which Leader describes as "essentially idealized visions of ladies in reverie doing nothing—beautifully" (1). These women are often viewed gazing at beautiful objects as the viewer gazes at them, beautiful objects as well. Hale's subject is carefully positioned to show off the abundance of draped material, a demonstration of class in its excess. The dark stole, perhaps ermine, offers a rich counterpoint to the pale, soft folds of fabric. The elegant netting over the subject's face delicately reveals her beauty. She gazes down on the item in her hand, relaxed and graceful. Van Hook notes the large number of such artworks bearing the title *Reverie* ("Decorative Images" 52), a name which would be appropriate for many of Hale's drawings and paintings of women.

*L'edition de Luxe* (figure 27) demonstrates many of Hale's characteristic devices through another beauty. The young woman sits before a book with filmy curtains behind her. Hale has again vertically split the picture plane with the line of the door, continued by the subject's body. The highly polished table before her is decorated with an exotic plant, shapely and graceful in a bowl. The miniature tree sheds its blossoms, which are reflected in the table's sheen to create a traditional image of good taste. Unlike Ellen Day Hale's worldly subject in *Morning News*, Lilian Hale's model is arrested by a large book of art plates which attest to woman's taste and love of beauty rather than the powers of reason implied by *Morning News*. Despite variations in their dress, settings, and activities, Van Hook calls the idealized images of women "omnipresent and arguably the predominant subjects of the Gilded Age" ("Milk White" 23). In her discussion about images of Boston women, Bernice Leader includes paintings from 1890 until the end of World War I, the time when she determines that "the way of life suggested by the Boston paintings and the genteel tradition disappeared after the social upheavals of the war,

industrialization, and the achievement of the vote for women,” but she adds that some do appear as late as the 1920s (10). While Leader considers the pervasive idealized images a demonstration of the consistency of artistic style in Boston; it has been mentioned previously that the critics often called it stagnation.

The image of the desirable female appeared in both literature and art at the beginning of the twentieth century. Leader finds that New England male patrician writers hold the most idealized impressions of women in the era’s novels as a result of their highly developed consciences. Leader makes the claim that “Boston Brahmins sanctify women even more than businessmen do, perhaps because of their idealist, romantic, New England transcendental heritage” (98). The settings in both media forms are consistently middle or upper class, decorated with aesthetically pleasing objects. This is the woman’s home, and she is responsible for its beauty; it is an example of her good taste. Leader acknowledges, however, the hints of dissatisfaction noted in *The Breakfast* as a mutual occurrence in both forms of media. The images continue to be produced, writes Leader, because “...Boston men seemed to have had more at stake than Boston women in defending older traditions, and less to gain by change”(20). The social evolution of the time offered women new potential, but threatened the male’s position of power. The images of idealized women allowed the conservative city’s men to forget the threat; they continued to purchase works of the genre and to produce it.

The women artists created the same restrained images of women that appeared in period literature. Leader says of Henry James’s characters: “the reader becomes aware that his heroines will be shackled, if not destroyed, by men’s expectations of them” (100). This literature is translated artistically in the protected image of the woman, without worldly concerns, poised and graceful. She is the woman a man wishes to come home to after a day of making important

and worldly decisions. Although Philip Hale did not work in the financial world, he taught and wrote, venturing daily into the hustle of the real world. His studio remained in the Fenway building until his death in 1931, long after Lilian Hale gave hers up to work from home after the birth of their daughter. Her world resembled Van Hook's description of the idealized world Hale created in *L'edition de Luxe* (figure 27). Van Hook describes the woman in that picture as "...sealed off, protected from the outside by the curtained window and from us by her position behind the table [...] there is no husband or father returning from work, no newspaper announcing a labor strike, no sign of handbills on a lamppost. We listen in vain for the sound of the streetcar, the blast of the furnace, even the shouts of children" (*Angels of Art* 147).

Lilian Hale applied the same drawing techniques for her images of idealized women as she did in her still lifes and landscapes. The charcoal is again finely sharpened and generally applied in delicate vertical strokes. The subject for these images is the lady of leisure who appears to function solely for the pleasure of the viewer. As an early drawing of 1907 entitled *Daffydowndilly* (figure 28) indicates, these works were clearly intended to depict beauty, and they showed off Hale's technical expertise. Lilian Hale's choice of the subject of idealized women may have resulted, in part, from the new professionalism of the women artists as they fought the label of amateur, which had been applied often to their works based on their sex rather than their ability. Swinth points out that the term *amateur* moved from referencing the amusing projects of the upper class, to indicating poor artwork. Work by women artists was considered amateur, and the term *professional* during this period was applied to male work (27). Women struggled for recognition as serious artists, and only by selling their works to an admiring public could they claim the title of *professional*. Lilian Hale called less experienced or inferior painters "damned amateurs" using her husband's expression, for she never otherwise swore (Nancy Hale,

“Eyes and No Eyes” 56). The inseparable linking of the two words is a testament to her assurance of her own position in the art world

The Boston public desired objects of beauty on their walls, and the female ideal was a favored figure study. The drive of the women artists to gain stature may have thus contributed to Boston’s failure to venture into experimental styles and methods like more progressive groups, especially the New York artists. Swinth writes of the beginning of the century, “The dynamic between men and women was now openly competitive. To call it a race and make the finish line almost near was only to formulate a more immediate and visceral metaphor for women’s challenge to the art world” (144). Lilian Hale felt keenly the desire to be professional, but her Victorian upbringing also encouraged her conformity to prescribed social roles. Her artistic aspirations, while serious, were structured by the surrounding society to which Lilian Hale felt the need to belong.

The frustrations for women inherent in the struggle to be considered art professionals are highlighted by the social view of the time which included a perception that masculinity was rational, and femininity was irrational; masculinity was active and aggressive, femininity was passive and emotional (Nochlin, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” 165). Van Hook specifies of the gendering of genres that “...beauty was defined as feminine, while nobility or character were found to be masculine” (Introduction, “Angels” 12). Women in pictures functioned as one more object of decoration among the others arranged artfully in the home. Works created by women were considered more sensitive and refined, while men were expected to produce works of vigor (Swinth 143). Swinth offers a specific sampling of vocabulary to demonstrate the gender constructs of the era. In art criticism two words came into heavy use after the Civil War. The first, *technique*, was applied to robust male work, while the other,

*sympathy*, was used to describe works by female artists (143). Between 1890 and 1910, the critics began to consider *technical refinement* in art as masculine, while the *poetic effect* of a work was pronounced feminine (Swinth 154). Swinth adds that these terms, defined by gender, continued to appear in criticism well into the modern era (191-192).

Van Hook and Leader concur that the male artists of the day had a reason to keep the idealized images alive, as women began to threaten the bourgeois patriarchy in place by continually taking more public roles. Men and women artists struggled to make a living, but the preference for defined styles of artwork allowed them to attain that goal with more ease. Lilian Hale continued to produce idealized images of women until she had built a significant portrait practice, and she was not alone in her resistance to abandon such ideals of beauty. Hermann Dudley Murphy, another painter trained at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, demonstrates the influence of the idealized image on the era's portrait painting (figure 29). His 1905 portrait of Mrs. Sarah Skinner is consistent with the aesthetic beauty of the idealized women, complete with the blossoms surrounding her. Her dress and hat are dainty and feminine, and she sits in white gloves in a protected garden area. Only her gaze provides a sense of the directness attributed to the real women of Boston where she lived.

A version of idealized womanhood by Philip Hale uses daughter Nancy as a model (figure 30). She wears a flowing gown and is surrounded by flowers; however, different settings differentiate the Hales' figure paintings. Philip Hale's female figures are painted *en plein air* like his work *In the Garden* (figure 31), and Lilian Hale's figures cautiously occupy the woman's domain, the home. The works by Boston's male painters were often distinguishable by their outdoor locations. Frederic Bosley's *In the Apple Orchard* (figure 32) creates another outdoor scene, reminiscent of Monet's 1875 painting *Woman with Parasol* (figure 33) of his wife with a

child. The figures in both of these paintings pursue carefree outdoor pursuits while beautifully clothed in white under drifting soft clouds. Monet's Impressionist technique has simply been replaced by a more conservative Boston school approach in Bosley's version.

Although the real Boston women did not closely resemble the idealized images, they desired domestic harmony. In *The Welcome* (figure 34) Lilian Hale depicts domestic perfection. A fire warms the room. Candles stand ready to be lit in delicate candelabra; a flowering branch on the mantel delivers a hint of the exotic motif often employed by the Boston school. A cluster of fruits beckons from a table, and the beautiful subject welcoming us into this room is an image of chaste perfection. She is the American ideal, a version slimmer and more innocent than its French prototype.<sup>37</sup> Her graceful pose is crowned by the flower in her dark hair. Van Hook notes the wealth of influences on the decorative images: "The creation of a spiritualized interior can be traced to sources as disparate as Japanese prints, Vermeer, Whistler, and Puvis. What matters is not the source, but the particular kind of experience that American artists borrowed from the past, and that they associated that experience with the feminine sphere" (*Angels* 110). Of course, even though the images themselves become somewhat routine in aspect, different artists lend their own touches to the forms. Lilian Hale's women were particularly ethereal in their expressions and positions. *The Welcome* is an unusual drawing for Hale in that the woman meets the gaze of the intruder in her world. While she appears to be recognizing an arrival as implied by the title of the picture, Hale's subject registers no concern, cocooned as she is in her protected realm of domesticity.

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<sup>37</sup> Bailey Van Hook acknowledges the shift in the appeal of body types in *Angels of Art*, p. 109.

Philip Hale revealed his clear acceptance of the stereotype of the idealized women in a letter to Lilian Westcott Hale on 8 January 1902. He describes why he loves her: “So it’s no wonder I love you dear since you’re so beautiful tho really now it’s your goodness that is far ahead as the chief love winner. For I keep wondering dear at your goodness and sweetness and worshipping it” (SSC, HFP, 91.1). The titles of his artworks provide further indication of Philip Hale’s appreciation of the idealized woman. *The Lovely Years* (figure 35) depicts two young women sitting together decorously. Hale’s title implies that the period of young womanhood is woman’s most attractive stage, in keeping with the Boston idealized images. Hale’s viewpoint is indicative of the pervasive thinking of the time. In his work *Great Portraits: Women*, Philip Hale demonstrates the objectification of women, impossible to avoid during the time period, as he describes the goal of painting women subjects:

What would one have of a woman’s portrait? That it should suggest something of her charm; something of the subtleties, the *nuances*, of expression; something, too, of the exquisitely delicate color changes of the face. And more: that it should have about it a certain suggestion of vitality, as if the seated or standing figure were about to move the next moment—or at least could move if she desired it. These qualities, of course, are among the hardest things to suggest in Art; and it is astonishing how many really fine portraits are fine without any of these merits [...] because the general *allure* of the thing is agreeable. (78)

The use of the word *allure* suggests not only the appearance of the art, but the appearance of the subject for Hale. His description of Elizabeth Vigee Lebrun’s work assumes a manner of looking at women which merges men’s desire for female beauty with the women’s goal to satisfy it. Hale writes of the artist: “While she is, of course, by no means among the very great painters,



she does rank among the half dozen of this world who have had the gift, or the knack, of painting women as they desire to look,—as men would have them look” (*Great Portraits* 64). It is essential to point out after a wording which today can only be interpreted as overtly sexist, that the noteworthy instructor and critic was no salacious misogynist, but a respected thinker who incorporated the ideas of his period with all their conflicts. The cultural constructs in place date Philip Hale’s writings. He expands his appraisal of Vigee Lebrun’s work to include the heavily gendered notions of portrayal already discussed in terms of vocabulary: “Perhaps as a woman, she understood women better than most men do; indeed, the great men painters of women—Da Vinci, Watteau, Gainsborough—have been half woman themselves in the sensitiveness and intuition, though Da Vinci added to this instinctive sense an intellect that scorned the intuition he had” (*Great Portraits* 67). The reader can draw much cultural information from this statement. First, Philip Hale’s wide knowledge of art history allows his selection of several painters who were considered talented in producing artworks of women. His comment acknowledges women artists as sensitive and intuitive, while male artists, governed by intellect, are more rational.

His writing provides a cultural artifact of the ideas of an advanced thinker of the period; so advanced, in fact, that he supported his wife in a male-dominated profession. Actually, Blanche Glassman Hersh’s analysis of the relationships of the first gender reformers in the country provides similarities to the marriage between Philip Leslie Hale and Lilian Westcott Hale. The earliest feminist spirits recognized difficulties within the structure of marriage, and Hersh comments on their progressive approach to such unions: “...these couples shaped their own marriages into new patterns, creating egalitarian unions based on autonomy and shared responsibilities” (218). She notes that many of these men were from New England, the original capital for intellectual thought. Such ideas were extremely liberal for the time. A more common

view is summed up in a newspaper clipping entitled “Woman Suffrage Agitation,” saved in one of Lilian Hale’s sketchbooks, which reads:

As I understand the woman suffrage movement, it is an inheritance, for which few persons care much now, from a movement set on foot about the end of the war by some of the Old Line Abolitionists. They were out of business with the success of the war. They were a sort of people who disliked to be in a majority and very conscientiously looked around for a cause sufficiently unpopular. They stumbled on woman’s suffrage and took it up heartily and bravely. (SSC, HFP, 131)

The writer of the passage is Lilian Hale’s father-in-law, Edward Everett Hale, a champion of free-thinking. She may have saved the clipping because she differed with his ideas, although she claimed to her daughter that the Hales had no faults (Nancy Hale, “The World, the Flesh, and the Devil” 38). It appears significant that Lilian Hale chose to clip and save this particular short item from the many published writings of Edward Everett Hale. Another indication of the tenor of the times was Philip Hale’s membership in the exclusively male St. Botolph’s Club in Boston.

Hersh points out that even the feminist women “...retained, and indeed glorified, the conventional domestic structure, but they also recognized the crucial importance of new roles and new arrangement within the traditional framework” (218).

Philip Hale certainly supported his wife, both emotionally and financially, in her ambition to be a great artist. Although she was a career professional in an unlikely era, Lilian Hale was also a rigid New Englander, who upheld the idea of a happy home and the responsibilities of motherhood. The marriage the Hale artists built was a key element of Lilian Hale’s world and her work. At the same time that Philip Hale provided steadfast support to his wife, like his peers, he placed women on a pedestal. Van Hook acknowledges that such a view

was widely shared: “They put women where they believed they belonged and where they believed it their right to put them, in the rarefied realm of art, culture, and refinement. Women were the creations not the creators, and became the symbols of an artistic generation’s search for beauty beyond the pervasive materialism of American life” (*Angels* 67). The imaged women were creatures of leisure, not workers. They relaxed and enjoyed what life offered. Lilian Westcott Hale generally placed the idealized figures inside the protection of home, showing none of her husband’s outdoor freedom. In *Celia’s Bower* (figure 36) though, the beauty relaxes on a porch where she shields her fair skin from the sun’s rays with a parasol. She examines a flower, once again with a hint of melancholy.

The world in these artworks was as ideal as Philip Hale and men of the period wished it to be. Nancy Hale writes about her father’s reaction to the reality of a woman’s life, remembering her mother’s mundane and rigorous canning during wartime:

...how her face flushed to purple, how currants stained her hands, her hair fell in her eyes, and an expression of purpose tensed her face. If he caught her so, my father would be likely to say, “My dear you are always the loveliest of your sex. But in that particular costume you look a little *less* lovely than I have ever seen you.” The whole thing, all that cooking, caused him acute pain. (*Life in the Studio* 91)

Nancy Hale remembers such incidents as especially difficult for Philip Hale because he “preferred her to look beautiful” (*Life in the Studio* 91). Bernice Leader describes Philip Hale’s preference for kittenish women (124), and in that he was part of a large group. He admired the type of woman that his wife depicted in drawings and paintings, images which gained her recognition as a painting professional in possession of unusual ability and technique.

The idealized images eventually faded from production even in Boston, as the world tired of the decorative approach. The images are artistic artifacts of the period, and by producing them, Lilian Westcott Hale ensured sales of her work and professional status. Those benefits, however, bear no insight into how she felt about the idealized images. Certainly, they indicate a sheltering of women and the separation of the man's and the woman's worlds. *The Veil* (figure 37) intensifies the effect of this separation by creating the same type of double division that she used in landscapes. *The Veil* shows Hale's standard window barrier separating the woman from the outside world, and the title references the secondary barrier of the wedding veil. *The Veil*, despite its reference to a traditionally happy event, creates a feeling of despair. The veil worn by the figure clearly implies marriage which will bind the young woman to the interior world she occupies in the picture. She sits before the window,<sup>38</sup> clearly indicated again in this work, and another Hale snow scene lies beyond. The girl is solemn, deep in thought or perhaps in recognition of the restrictions that confront her with the completion of a brief ceremony. The mood evoked is one of sadness and isolation, despite the peaceful quiet that pervades Lilian Hale's work.

The quiet, veiled bride reveals an aspect of Hale's idealized women that contrasts with the portraits which follow; the idealized women bear a solemn, somewhat vacant expression while the subjects in Hale's portraits are lively and individual in expression. *Apple Blossoms and Narcissus* (figure 38) typifies the images of women produced by Hale, and it illustrates this aspect of the women's appearance. The scene is filled with flowers; an Oriental wall hanging

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<sup>38</sup> The young bride occupies a chair that was made for Edward Everett Hale by one of his parishioners. The rustic chair, the possession of William Wertenbaker, the grandson of Lilian Westcott Hale, supports Hirshler's placement of Lilian Hale in the Colonial Revival Movement ("Lilian Westcott Hale").

hugs the left side of the drawing, balanced by the curved figure of the woman bending over a bloom from the arrangement of flowers on the table in the center. Her face is blank, as expressionless as the woman in *The Veil*. The untitled image in figure 39 demonstrates the point again. The woman in the drawing is clothed in the wrap with its dark contrasting trim, frequently used by Hale. She holds a cup which forms the first link in a chain of graceful objects. Atop the teacup is a delicate cream pitcher which is crowned by the woman's graceful hand which mimics the shape of the pitcher's opening. The final object of beauty rises above the other three to form the fourth tier—the woman's face covered by a veil protecting her from the world. The image of a simple moment is delicate and technically exquisite. A careful examination of the woman's face reveals that her eye, which is assumed to be downcast upon the pouring liquid, actually gives the appearance of being closed. Hale's image called *The Bride* (figure 40), of the same model used for *The Veil* (figure 37), displays a flat calm expression, as does the image in *The Old Ring Box* (figure 9). Of these idealized images, only the woman in front of the fireplace in *The Welcome* (figure 34) appears completely alert, but she also shows no emotion, neither delight nor displeasure. She might be voicing a greeting to her visitor of "Oh, you again." The curious expressions on Hale's idealized images, vacant of emotion and intelligence, identify creatures of bland nonchalance despite their beauty.

In drawing conclusions about Lilian Hale's many images of idealized womanhood, two significant points must be considered. First, Lilian Hale and her daughter retained a sizeable number of her artworks for their own pleasure. Second, they did not retain images of idealized women. Nancy Hale writes of her mother's collection during the last decade of Lilian Hale's life, when she lived in Virginia and her commissions had decreased:

The portraits she did in Virginia were much admired, and contented clients went out of their way to bring prospective sitters to her. One such client telephoned to ask if she might bring a Mrs. W— to tea on Thursday to see examples of my mother's work. My mother spent the intervening days hanging additional pictures, which had been out in her little storeroom, on the walls. When four o'clock Thursday came, the two women arrived. They drank tea, chattered volubly, stayed for an hour or so, and then made their departure. At the door my mother's client said, "I'm *so* sorry you weren't able to find some pictures for us to look at."

"I was so stunned I couldn't think of one word to say," my mother told me next day. "I just stood there gaping, with this whole place plastered with my work in back of me." ("Eyes and No Eyes" 56)

In addition to the pictures she kept for herself, Lilian Hale shared her work freely with family members, presenting them with their own portraits as well as other still lifes and landscapes. In a letter dated 19 May 1942, Nancy Hale, who was living in Washington, D.C. with her third husband, asked her mother for eight or nine new artworks so that she could rotate the ones that she already had (SSC, NHP, 7.3). Nancy Hale also gave freely to family members from the many pictures left in the studio in Massachusetts after her mother's death, and she passed down much of her own collection to the generations that followed in her family. Consequently, the Hales' family members have many examples of Lilian Hale's works: portraits, snow scenes, and still lifes. It is significant that the pictures retained by Lilian and Nancy Hale were generally fine examples of Lilian Hale's work. The second factor to consider in drawing conclusions is the noticeable absence in their collections of idealized images of women. Only one from the genre

emerged recently, severely damaged by smoke and unprofessional efforts to reverse the consequent discoloration. After professional restoration, the image (figure 41) has been salvaged, but its presence in the family's collection appears to be based solely upon its previously unsalable condition.

The absence of idealized women in Lilian Hale's personal collection is the best clue to the artist's feeling about the images. She retained fine examples of the other genres discussed here. She sold the idealized pictures of women in the strong market which supported their production. Neither she nor her daughter appears to have favored them for their own collections. The likely indication is that Lilian Hale produced the works to build her reputation, leading to the many portrait commissions she began to receive. The dazed and vacant expressions of her women may express a subversive view by the artist toward the feminine images so popular at the beginning of the twentieth century. Women were decorative objects, sealed off from the busy, active, male world of economics and politics. Nonetheless, women established the code for the home, controlling the same artistic standards that placed them on their pedestal. Van Hook qualifies the granting of such control to women: "That society assigned the role of culture to women also suggests the diminished importance of culture in American life. Culture became the decoration of life, not an essential part of it" ("Decorative Images" 61). Van Hook describes the weakening of culture as a result of its connection to women arbiters: "This construction of American culture as feminine eventually broke down, and these paintings, in their strange amalgam of ideal and real, participated in its dissolution." She adds that the images did not appear in works of American art history for the half century between 1925 and 1975, "because they were feminine and genteel, not masculine and vigorous; elitist, not democratic [...] and traditional, not realist or modernist" (*Angels of Art* 13). The Ash Can School's demonstration of

realism in its depictions of middle and working class subjects, and its more vital approach to the act of painting, influenced the expectation for a less ideal and a more real image of life in America. The idealized images in Boston art gave way to more realistic images of women. Instructor William Paxton's painting of his wife, *The Green Dolman* (figure 42), demonstrates this more realistic depiction of womanhood, which had emerged by the year of its painting, 1924. Lilian Hale's creation of the lovely images, while not her most original work, allowed an audience to imagine with what delicate perception she might handle portraits, the goal that she had mentioned so many years earlier as a solid pursuit for an artist who wanted to make a living from art. Her portraits, animated by distinctive expressions, come to life in a way that Lilian Hale's idealized women do not. It is to those paintings that this discussion will turn next.



## Portraits of Boys, Portraits of Girls

Despite their representation of stereotypical femininity, Lilian Westcott Hale's idealized images of women were well received and demonstrated her refined technique. Her works depicting idealized female images demonstrate Hale's fine draftsmanship as well as the artistic preference of the era. Art historian Robert R. Wark cautions against placing too much emphasis on artistic details as cultural expressions. To analyze in such a manner, according to Wark, "is to mistake a general and virtually meaningless pictorial convention for something of special significance" (31). Clothing, expression, and particular depictions of gesture in art are often merely the demonstration of cultural convention, sending no deeper message. Hale's idealized images of women, as a body, roughly preceded her years as a portrait and figure painter. She may have found the idealized women of her pictures creatures of beauty, as the men did, but it is equally as likely that they brought her to an artistic philosophical impasse. Lilian Hale's works of the idealized woman provided little indication of her personal artistic view, except perhaps through their exclusion from her own collection. The third genre of her artworks, however, offers clear indication of the artist's awareness of the period's gender imbalance. Pollock notes the need to recognize the individuality of the work of women artists, rather than categorizing their tendencies by feminine stereotypes. Pollock recognizes, nonetheless, the clear influences of a woman's surroundings on her work: "To avoid the embrace of the feminine stereotype which homogenizes women's work as determined by natural gender, we must stress the heterogeneity of women's art work, the specificity of individual producers and product. Yet we have to recognize what women share—as a result of nurture not nature, i.e. the historically variable social systems which produce sexual differentiation" ("Modernity and the Spaces" 77).

Examining a number of Hale's figure paintings alongside others from the same time

demonstrates her individual expression of the clear division between the genders. Hale's message is straightforward, even as it is subtle. She is comfortable in her world, yet she indicates an understanding of its restrictions for women. The opinion shared by cultural anthropologists and feminist art historians is also voiced by Shearer West in her survey of the history of portraiture: "Portraits are filled with the external signs of a person's socialized self" (30), a point which is made clear in Hale's commissioned works and family portraits, with their attention to dress and pose. This section is called "Portraits of Boys, Portraits of Girls" because Hale so clearly divided the sexes in her art, indicating her awareness of the differences in the two. Her career as a portrait painter was established before Philip Hale's death, but she continued this genre into her later years, and many of the works examined here were painted after her husband's death in 1931 when Lilian Hale was just entering her fifties. Her opinion, if she intended to express one, is unclear, yet the difference between the genders is not.

Lilian Westcott Hale was well respected as a portrait painter, particularly of children. Portraiture provided income, but it occupied a lower position in the hierarchy of artistic genres than other art forms. As a result, portraiture became a genre in which women were allowed to participate. Swinth points out that for the men who did paint portraits, "a gendered division of artistic authority preserved male preeminence within portraiture by allocating to men the painting of male sitters, who supposedly required greater critical distance and analytical representation, and granting to women the painting of child and female sitters, who supposedly required greater empathy and identification" (86-87). Figure painting held a higher status than portraiture, and male artists often fought the label of mere portrait painter. Frequently they claimed that portrait commissions were simply a side venture to their other more important works (Swinth 85). Lilian Westcott Hale aspired to portrait painting early in her career as a way to make a living, and while

the previous discussions of landscapes, still lifes, and idealized women make clear the fact that she followed several paths in her work, her portraits became popular and her schedule crowded.<sup>39</sup>

The distinction in status between figure studies and portraits was more troublesome for men than for women, as the male artists sought to separate themselves from the growing number of female professional artists. Women artists attempted to elevate the acceptance of the genre as they pursued portrait commissions. Swinth explains that "...Cecilia Beaux developed the most elaborated defense of portraiture. She argued that true portraits had two essential qualities—'Imaginative Insight' and 'Design,' by which she meant that a portrait conveyed an 'idea' or narrative while also embodying high academic principles of composition and representation" (87). Renowned portrait painter Lydia Field Emmet, a contemporary of Lilian Hale's, described the two difficulties confronting a portraitist as getting a likeness and at the same time creating a fine decorative work, without either goal spoiling the other (Swinth 87). Certainly the portraits by Lilian Hale, such as figure 43 of her grandson Mark Hardin in his lavender outfit, both reproduce the particular child on canvas and perform a decorative function. The chair's tapestry covering is a charming and colorful detail. Mark's bee-stung lips and splayed, chubby hand are among the distinctive elements of this particular work. All of Lilian Hale's portraits and figure studies are singular, gaining their distinctive features from the subject.

Hale's artistic perspective could not please every client. Leader notes that even the very conservative Boston painters used "...a more sober academic style for their portrait commissions than for other subjects" (17). This cautionary approach surely resulted from the aim to please the

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<sup>39</sup> Hirshler's dissertation includes a listing of the known works of Lilian Hale by year. As an example of her success in the field of portraiture, in 1922 thirteen works appear to be commissioned oil portraits or drawings, while four other charcoals fill out the list. The list for 1923 includes thirteen portraits and one snow scene.

patron.<sup>40</sup> In addition to the need to “make it like” and also to create a decorative picture, social structures contributed to shaping commissioned portraits. Nancy Hale wrote of the angst her mother felt dealing with clients: “The portrait of the fat little tow-haired boy, wearing blue overalls and holding a red zinnia he had snatched out of a vase the first morning, showed every promising sign,” until the boy’s father came to see it. Lilian Hale cried out to her husband about the incident, ““He hated it and he hated me [...] he slammed around this room, scowling and objecting to everything. What am I going to *do*?”

““Ignore him,’ my father advised.” The evidence of social controls is demonstrated in Lilian Hale’s response to her husband:

““I can ignore his saying it doesn’t look like his child. And I can endure his showing he didn’t think it was any good,’ she said, though doubtfully. ‘But he says he won’t have any son of his painted holding a flower.’

““Oh for God’s sake!’ my father said” (“Eyes and No Eyes” 54).

The Hales clearly did not concur with the strict visual adherence to manliness dictated by the period, although Lilian Hale finally painted over the flower, and the client, in his later years, came to love the portrait so much that he moved it between his summer and winter homes (“Eyes and No Eyes” 54). Another client disputed Lilian Hale’s eye for color to a sad end. Nancy Hale explains before telling the story, that her parents were of the opinion that an artist is hired to produce an image because the client admires the ability of that artist; “he was in effect paying to see himself, his wife, or his children through those eyes” (“Eyes and No Eyes” 53). Nonetheless, clients often found it impossible to control their own opinions, as in the case of the mother who

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<sup>40</sup> Nancy Hale describes the frequent difficulties her mother experienced in pleasing clients in “Eyes and No Eyes, or, The Art of Seeing.”

insisted that her daughter be painted in a pale blue dress with a matching feather boa. Lilian Hale complained to her husband again, saying, “‘She looks so awful in it. [...] Like a glass of skim milk. I don’t see it that way’” (“Eyes and No Eyes” 52). Despite her husband’s curt suggestion that she simply tell the client she could not do it that way, Lilian Hale’s Victorian reserve did not allow her to issue such a dictum, and the client ultimately rejected the completed portrait. Although often such rejection had the happy result of providing works for exhibition, in this case, Hale painted another picture on the other side of the canvas. Nancy Hale wrote of finding the canvas years later: “The other day, when I was going over old pictures, I came on Mrs. W---, looking at me after thirty years. There she was, pale and wishy-washy, on the back side of a painting of a brilliant green door, a scarlet trumpet vine, and glimmering white china glimpsed within the interior” (“Eyes and No Eyes” 53). A local newspaper column based on an interview with Lilian Hale, reported that, “Asked if she had ever succumbed to the whims of her ‘sitter,’ she replied ‘only once and I regretted that once’” (Christensen). Nancy Hale’s recollections indicate that Lilian Hale actually consolidated several unpleasant episodes into her claim.

Reading Lilian Hale’s figure drawings and paintings, commissioned works, and family portraits, reveals the imprint of the gender constructs of her world, as she makes an individual, quiet statement about the imbalance in society. Perhaps as a result of her subtlety, the pervasive gender differences in the poses and the clothing of Lilian Hale’s male and female subjects have not been analyzed. Examples of what other artists were producing during the same period prove that Lilian Westcott Hale reflects no general tendency of the era, although as Linda Nochlin discusses in *Representing Women*, “... the apparently public political beliefs and the presumably private feeling people have about gender roles in any given moment in history are more closely

intertwined than has previously been suspected” (57). The idealized images of women in Lilian Westcott Hale’s repertoire have already been discussed as resulting from audience preference. She failed to paint the homemaker, although other artists portrayed women at household tasks. The subject in Joseph DeCamp’s *The Seamstress* (figure 44) bends gracefully to her sewing with golden tones highlighting the good work she performs for her family. Banta points out that during the years following the Civil War until 1910 a canon of female types was depicted in art which “acted to contain change”; however, change was occurring gradually: “Merging and diverging, the subforms wrenched from the older traditions were commentaries on the prior state of the original image and also on the new forms in the throes of being born” (*Imaging American Women* xxxi).

The discussion of figures in Lilian Hale’s art will focus primarily on images of children, because they comprised such a significant portion of her work. Portrait painting was an acceptable pursuit for women, and Hale’s commissions grew as a result of the acknowledgment of her sensitive portrayal of young subjects. Ives Gammell wrote admiringly of Hale’s portraits of children. He never lost respect for the technique he learned as a student at the Museum School in Boston, and it was his appreciation for solid technical skills that led Gammell to place Hale’s portraits of children behind only those of Velasquez. He particularly recognizes her ability to personalize her subjects, rather than relying on idealized images of children (“Appreciation”). The children in Hale’s portraits do not look alike, as Gammell points out, but they do retain similarities to each other, defined by gender. Whether Lilian Hale was working from a model, on a portrait commission, or with the children in her own family, she incorporated the gender stereotypes of her upbringing. Her many portraits of young girls revealed how the idealized images of women came to be. Girlhood, in Lilian Hale’s hands, reflected the discipline

and self control of her Victorian youth, as seen in the girls' stiff positions, while the boys sit comfortably. This examination of the dichotomy in gender portrayal in Lilian Hale's portraits of children is preceded by consideration of how other significant portrait painters of the period record gender differences in their own art.

Like Lilian Westcott Hale, Cecilia Beaux turned to portrait painting for practical purposes. Unlike Hale, Beaux did not marry and needed the income that a respected portrait painter could generate (Sharp 59). Sharing the birth year of 1855 with Lilian Hale's sister-in-law Ellen Day Hale, Cecilia Beaux began her career painting portraits of her own family members, before moving up the ranks to paint the upper class (Carr viii). She consistently depicted her subjects in formal poses and with carefully maintained, crisp attire. Beaux adopted the general tendency of portraitists in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries to demonstrate the subject's social position in the painting, highlighting the comforts that money made possible. *Mrs. Sedgwick and Daughter Christina* (figure 45) exhibits a clear sense of propriety in both the subjects' positions and their dress. The portrait was Beaux's favorite, and she exhibited it in New York and Boston. The quiet reserve of the mother and the daughter reflects the expectations for ladies of 1902, the year it was painted. The pair is well dressed, and the woman looks down at the child as though making sure that she is behaving as she should. In her comprehensive appraisal of the work of Beaux, *Cecilia Beaux: American Figure Painter*, Sylvia Yount discusses Beaux's capable paintings of mothers with their children as well as Beaux's works of multiple children. Lilian Westcott Hale, by contrast, deals almost exclusively with individual subjects. Figure 46, again by Beaux, features another pair, this time siblings. Painted in 1897, five years before the Sedgwicks, *Sister and Brother* offers an equal approach to the genders, which is echoed in the artist's representations of individual males and females. The

audience looks down on the children from an adult's perspective, but the pair appears matched in dress and in bearing.

John Singer Sargent was the era's most recognized portrait painter. Like Beaux, he demonstrates a balanced handling of males and females in his commissions, many of which were for important Bostonians. His paintings of children are appropriate miniature versions of their distinguished parents.<sup>41</sup> Marie-Louise Pailleron, painted in 1881 with her brother Edouard (figure 47), has been described as complex and as an example of the "petite fille modern," who emerged in literature in about 1860, to steal the position of significance from her male counterparts (Gallati 76-78). Marie-Louise Pailleron stares, direct and assured, at her audience, showing Sargent's separation from the image of the fainting flower of Victorian womanhood. Despite Sargent's central positioning of the young girl, he demonstrates no easily perceived differentiation in treatment of the two genders in his portraits.<sup>42</sup> His male and female subjects, often painted together, occupy comfortable positions, but that allowance is afforded both genders, and the formality of their clothing is similar as well.

Before turning to Lilian Westcott Hale's portraits and figure studies, it is useful to consider feminist theorist Rita Felski's observation that, "Rather than expressing the truth of female identity, [...] art becomes a means of questioning identity" (182). She recognizes that women cannot simply shed the male-defined reality they live: "We cannot simply cast off these false representations to uncover an unblemished and authentic female reality. Any attempt by

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<sup>41</sup> Trevor Fairbrother 1986, 65-66, discusses both the period's tendencies and John Singer Sargent's Boston paintings.

<sup>42</sup> The most inclusive examination of Sargent's portraits of youth is found in Gallati's work *Great Expectations: John Singer Sargent Painting Children*.



women to depict women's perspective is enmeshed within rhetoric, narrative, and figure, shaped by the symbols and conventions of a phallogentric culture" (18). In truth, we might even remove *phallogentric* from Felski's words and retain the passage's significance—that is, that women as well as men and children are products of the complex social structures surrounding them—shaped, reshaped, and reinforced by the preceding generations. The purpose in drawing upon Felski's words is to point to the unusual quality of Hale's acknowledgement of the disparate gender positions in society. She does not do so as a part of a group, but with her own quiet voice. Hale grew up in a male-dominated society which shaped her thinking and her perceptions. While she appeared willing to conform to social expectations, the examination of Lilian Hale's artistic reaction to her surroundings indicates awareness, if not objection, to the disparate positions held by the genders.

A forceful example of Hale's representation of the female form in art, after the idealized woman had faded from her oeuvre, is *Victoria*, also called *Girl in Green* (figure 48). Completed in 1931, the year of Philip Hale's death, the painting offers an elevated viewpoint, gazing down on the girl who is formally dressed in taffeta and long, black lace gloves. Hale's young girls consistently wore clothing which might best be described as "proper female attire." The hands are prim, with the fingers laced in a closed, controlled clasp. The difference in Hale's treatment of the genders in her work is demonstrated through comparison of *Victoria* to *Arthur Whitcomb* (figure 49), painted in the same time period. Both *Victoria* and *Arthur Whitcomb* were painted in front of Hale's frequently used backdrop of an Oriental screen. As already mentioned, the viewer's perspective looms over *Victoria* with her guarded gaze, while young *Arthur*, seated on the viewer's level, sports a relaxed half-smile, signaling his delight in being with his companion dog. His legs are comfortably crossed in front of him, and his dress is decidedly casual.

Although Hale appears comfortable with her position as artist and wife and mother, she demonstrates a consistent dichotomy in her treatment of the genders in her images of childhood.

The examination of more portraits will reveal the consistency of Hale's approach to the genders, which was subtle and only appeared to comment through comparison. Hale shunned aggressive behavior, and Hirshler notes that her desire for recognition as a painting professional among both males and females was not accompanied by a strong urge for emancipation, a view which is shared by Beaux and Cassatt ("Lilian Westcott Hale" 167-168). Mary Cassatt has been compared to Lilian Westcott Hale,<sup>43</sup> largely because both artists are recognized for their paintings of youth. Certainly the two artists' styles are different; Cassatt is linked to the French Impressionist movement despite her American roots. Griselda Pollock calls attention to the progressive view that Cassatt takes toward women, as well as to the tremendous influence of her work on the artists who followed (*Mary Cassatt* 216-217). One aspect of her experimental tendency is demonstrated by the natural freedom she allows her children. Cassatt's *Little Girl in a Blue Armchair* (figure 50), painted in 1878, two years before Hale was born, reveals a far more relaxed female pose than Hale's *Victoria*. Linda Nochlin claims that Cassatt is "deconventionaliz[ing] the child portrait" (*Representing Women* 200). The girl's expression is slightly sour and irritable, indicating Cassatt's desire to transgress traditional visual images of females. The sprawling child defies the Victorian stereotype of appropriate behavior for young girls, an approach not adopted by Lilian Westcott Hale. Other groups of paintings from Cassatt's oeuvre<sup>44</sup> also reflect her departure from Victorian ideology. Her nursing mothers (figure 51), in

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<sup>43</sup> For example, see Gammell, *The Boston Painters*, 125.

<sup>44</sup> Breeskin is relied upon here for a compilation of the works of Mary Cassatt.

addition to her bathing women, and the many unclothed figures of children, demonstrate Cassatt's comfort with the nude. Hale followed Cassatt chronologically, but she did not paint mothers and children, or nudes, or girls straying from the prescribed Victorian stereotypes for appearance and demeanor. Hale's disinclination to defy social standards allowed her only the subtle demonstration of the divergence in the appearance of the sexes in her art.

Other artists challenged the Victorian image of propriety and femininity in their paintings. The self-assurance of Sargent's *The Honourable Victoria Stanley* (figure 52), commissioned just before the turn of the century, attests to his recognition of the potential for female strength. He paints an assertive figure holding a riding crop, a frequent prop for male subjects. Lilian Westcott Hale's many paintings of young girls provide a sharp contrast to Sargent's Victoria Stanley. This discussion will concentrate on three of the five generations of family members who posed for Hale during more than six decades, beginning with daughter Nancy, her most frequently painted subject. Lilian Hale found that she could incorporate caring for her daughter with her artwork if the child served as her model. Certainly, Hale gave her young subject her attention as she gazed intently upon her, at once fulfilling desire and obligation as she practiced her profession and watched her child. While still in her infancy, Nancy Hale became the model for her mother's work (figure 53). In the 1919 painting *Nancy and the Map of Europe* (figure 54), Nancy Hale, at eleven, sits primly before a wall map; her doll mirrors her position on the other side of the canvas. The subject appears stiff and uncomfortable—proper, but not happy about it. She is holding a book, part of the grown-up world, but her doll is nearby, recently discarded. Despite her young age, she is solemn, and her collar is reminiscent of Puritan collars, while the chair is straight-backed, allowing no relaxing of the spine. Nancy Hale describes the picture in a story:

A prize-winning painting of my mother's called 'Nancy and the Map of Europe' shows me and my large doll, dressed in identical blue cotton-crepe dresses, with waistlines up under the armpits, and white guimpes. I hated dresses with high waistlines, because the other girls wore dresses with low waistlines. For that matter, I hated my doll, too. I had to pose so much in my childhood that when I reached the age of about thirteen I finally figured out a requirement of my own. I wouldn't pose, I said, unless I could be painted with a book. So all subsequent pictures show me in the act of reading (figure 55). Several are silhouetted against a window (figure 56); some show the book, some don't (figure 57); but all have the eyes downcast (figure 68)." ("Eyes and No Eyes" 61)<sup>45</sup>

Lilian Westcott Hale painted and drew Nancy continually with neither the free spirit of Cassatt's young girl in the blue armchair, nor the accentuation of strength in Sargent's Victoria Stanley. Nancy Hale is, instead, prim, subdued, and proper. She is an idealized child, in training to be an ideal woman.

The generations of children in Lilian Westcott Hale's family provide a particularly appealing study, because they alternate by gender. Hale's only daughter, Nancy, gave birth to two sons, and the first of those sons produced three daughters. The comparison of Lilian Hale's artistic treatment of the two female generations, separated by a half century, is interrupted by the males in between. The differences in the genders and the similarities in the two female generations separated by so many years, are startling, and they carry over to Hale's commissions and works using hired models as well. The portraits of family members are a particularly

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<sup>45</sup> In three of these four images, the eyes are clearly downcast and not closed, as I contended was the case with the idealized woman in figure 42. Although Nancy Hale holds an open book in figure 59, the figure is too heavily shadowed to make a determination.

appropriate group for analysis because Hale was able to control the poses and the clothing of the children to a far greater extent than with the commissioned works. As her conversations within her family demonstrate, Hale was sensitive to the reactions of her clients. No one was paying for her services when she drew and painted family members, and she was free to implement her own artistic ideas. The portraits of family members are, therefore, more true to what Hale wished to create. The 1936 portrait entitled *Mark in Overalls* (figure 59) shows Lilian Hale's oldest grandson, relaxing as comfortably as the Victorian chair allows. Hale cooperated with his terms: when the boy came in from play to relax for a spell in the chair, she began to work. Some time later, a revived Mark stood up, declaring "Portrait's done!" (von Thelen). Lilian Hale separated the genders through her art, and there are indications that she may have held different expectations for their behaviors as well. Bruce Cauthen, whose parents commissioned drawings of their two sons, recalls posing for Hale as a child. He remembers her understanding advice at the beginning of the sittings that he find a comfortable position, since he would need to hold still for a lengthy period. None of Lilian Hale's three great-granddaughters, painted during the same period, remembers similar advice (von Thelen). While Hale frequently seated female subjects in the same formal chairs as the one in which Mark lounged, the girls are demure and prim, like *Jackie* (figure 60), a commission of 1945.

Nancy Hale wrote of her mother's dislike for the male style of dressing which was extending even to young boys, making them look "like 'dreadful little men,' in dark suits with shirts, ties, and long pants—"two long black tubes' she called them," while the knot of a man's tie was referred to by Hale as " 'That awful V'" ("Eyes and No Eyes" 56). She avoided in her art the restrictive clothing that she found so unappealing on boys. The males in Hale's paintings of children frequently adopted casual poses and informal attire as in *Mark in Overalls*. The subject

is shirtless, and the rolled-cuff overalls reveal the tanned, youthful body of a boy who has only paused from his play. Her second grandson William Wertenbaker so admired the painting of his half-brother that he asked his grandmother to duplicate it with him as the subject (Wertenbaker). He too is seated informally in the same Victorian chair, his single-strapped jeans (figure 61) repeating the first portrait's delightful easiness. Another painting of young Bill from 1943 (figure 62), when he was five, captures the child in a rocking chair, looking pensively out of a window. He is naked to the waist. Of course, the years were passing, and one might consider that Lilian Westcott Hale was adapting to the times as she painted such relaxed children. An examination of Hale's paintings of the next generation, her three great-granddaughters, proves that this was not the case. A look at *Rosalie Janelle* in 1959 (figure 63) shows a similar prim positioning to daughter Nancy, forty years and two generations before (figure 54). The smocked dress was selected and purchased for the occasion by Lilian Hale who also decided the pose (Morton Interview).

The disparate handling of the genders by position and dress in Lilian Hale's paintings has not been previously discussed. A comparison of *Rosalie Janelle* to a painting from 1923 of a young male figure in the same chair (figure 64) focuses the point under discussion. Although he was painted more than thirty five years earlier, *Johnny Blake* is far more casual in dress and attitude than Hale's painting of her great-granddaughter. While the dissimilarity of the genders is obvious when examples like this are juxtaposed, Hale's individual treatment of all the children she painted or drew has allowed the different handling of the subjects by gender to go largely unnoticed. Her females, although uniformly prim, are unique entities, just as the more comfortably positioned males bear no strong similarity to each other. Her paintings of children captured the essence of the child; the gendered differences emerge only on close comparative

analysis. Figures 65 and 66 show Hale's second and third great-grandchildren. In each case she selected and purchased the dresses, also controlling the poses of the children. A preliminary sketch (figure 67) for the portrait in figure 65, indicates Hale's experimentation with different poses before settling on one that satisfied her. She customarily executed a full-sized, more finished drawing when she decided the composition. The slightly more relaxed appearance of the third sister (figure 66) may indicate more about the personality of the sitter than the desires of the artist. Mary Welby Hardin von Thelen recalls the circumstances of her portrait's creation:

As my mother later told the story, she took me to sittings for as long as she could bear it. The room was cold, because Ga<sup>46</sup> was a frugal New Englander and refused to turn the heat up. I was already a fidgety child, and there I was, uncomfortable and hungry. I couldn't sit still. Mother said to my father, "I can't take her anymore." My portrait was finished only because my father [Mark Hardin] took me, which was, in those days, not something men did. It was important to him. She did capture my impishness; the portrait has a lot of energy, like I was ready to get up... which I was—all the time. (16 April 2009)

This was the last portrait that Lilian Westcott Hale painted before her death in 1963. Gammell comments that Hale's portraits of children capture her sitters' "characteristic ceaseless activity in patterns of rare distinction and originality...The veritable tours de force of this kind which Mrs. Hale repeatedly performs with her uncooperative subjects are often nothing short of breathtaking" ("Appreciation" 17).

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<sup>46</sup> This was the name her great-grandchildren used for Lilian Westcott Hale.

Gammell lavishes praise, positioning Hale's efforts ahead of the child portraits of Reynolds and Van Dyck, whom he claims resorted to idealized images. While their results are attractive, he claims that Lilian Hale's creations are individuals: "Their subtle dissimilarities together have been successfully registered by Mrs. Hale with her sensitive draftsmanship. In this special skill, she stands with only a handful of other painters" ("Appreciation 17"). Although he recognizes her skillful technique and composition, Gammell does not comment on Hale's different treatment of her subjects by gender. In this detail she follows no established guidelines, nor any demand on the part of the audience. Lilian Hale's consistent stylistic separation in portraying males and females developed while her husband was alive and continued after his death. Hirshler makes the astute observation that Lilian Hale's career was at its highpoint for an extended number of years from about 1906 until 1931, mirroring the years of her marriage ("Lilian Westcott Hale" 161). Lilian Hale created her finest work with Philip Hale's unfailing support, even when her artwork clearly surpassed his own. Her achievement was reaching its pinnacle when her husband died in 1931, an event which sapped her usual vigor. Shortly before, she had become the first woman to win the National Academy of Design's Altman Prize for her stunning life-size portrait of son-in-law Taylor Hardin in his riding clothes (figure 68). With this painting Lilian Westcott Hale stepped slightly outside the area of expected behavior for women artists and with great success. She was solidly professional by this time, but women artists in general painted other women or children as a result of their great "sympathy." The painting of men, particularly imposing works like the portrait of Taylor Hardin, was left to men. The challenge in producing a work of such large dimensions<sup>47</sup> is indicated by Hale's painting an oil

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<sup>47</sup> The canvas measures 90" in height and 56" in width.



sketch in addition to her usual charcoal studies for a portrait (figure 69).<sup>48</sup> Hale, in the production of the imposing portrait of Taylor Hardin, appears to be making an artistic and a cultural statement: she can compete on a man's playing field. The award that the painting received as best genre or figure painting, led to her election to the Academy.<sup>49</sup>

Lilian Westcott Hale earned respect in a male-dominated profession, and Hirshler points out that her early success and noteworthy family connections afforded her little reason to rebel. Raised in a Victorian society, she desired respectability, and all good girls of the day were taught to accept the social standards that confined them. Hale worked within her world, successfully combining career, marriage, and motherhood. That feat, in itself, is remarkable for the period, without consideration for the high level of praise that Hale garnered for her work. Nancy Hale recalled in 1983, "Mother was always working [...] It makes me laugh when I hear people talk about women working now. Mother worked every morning [...]. When I was growing up, it never occurred to me that I wouldn't work" (Green). Lilian Westcott Hale was very much a product of her time, yet she pursued a career, and her artistic comment on the disparate treatment of the genders shaped her work in a manner that is both subtle and pervasive. Her message is one of recognition, if not of outright rebellion. The first step toward a correction of standards is acknowledgment of their unfairness and their significant need for change. Hale demonstrates that first step through her artistic expression of the confinement of the female to the domestic realm from birth to death.

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<sup>48</sup> This image, which Hirshler listed as missing in her 1992 dissertation, has surfaced with Lilian Hale's heirs.

<sup>49</sup> Erica Hirshler explains in her dissertation (135) that few women had won any prizes at the Academy, except the one awarded for the best work by a woman.

Lilian Hale's life is visible through her artwork, but also in the words of her daughter. The memoirs of Nancy Hale, a trained artist who became a writer, offer a deep and comprehensive view of Lilian Hale. She describes how Lilian Hale's art revealed the person who created it: "It was not that her pictures told about her, so much as that they *were* her; just as the other side of the moon, hidden, is still the moon" (Prologue, *Mary Cassatt* xxv). Lilian Hale's artistic creations were the result of great skill shaped by her sense of diligence and duty. When Nancy Hale asked her mother, many years after the fact, why she had spent so much time canning in the kitchen when her father had hated that it kept her from her art, Lilian Hale responded that it was the expectation for women during the war years. She recalled that women were told such domestications were their duty. Her daughter responded, "That's always been the trouble with you, doing what you ought to! [...] Why don't you ever do what you *want* to?" Showing her New England upbringing, Lilian Hale replied, "But I want to do what I ought to do" (*Life in the Studio* 94-95). Lilian Westcott Hale bent gracefully like the women she drew and painted, willingly conforming to the constraints of her world. There is, however, a subtle message as she peers through the windows of her home at the world beyond and as she captures young girls in training to become proper ladies while the boys are allowed to choose their own paths. Lilian Hale recognized the problem that her daughter's generation sought to correct by challenging gender rules. Christine Stansell says in *American Moderns: Bohemian New York and the Creation of a New Century*, "If the new century was to be a time when customary social differences might be blurred or even undone, then the line between men and women would need to be erased immediately. The Victorian sexual ideology assigned men to the world and women to the home. These separate spheres, to the moderns, had only bred 'lies and ignorances and reticences,'..." (88). Of course, the threat of modernism to the previous cultural standards cannot

be contained in a gender argument. The challenge affected the home and all the sociological meaning attached to it since the United States had been settled. It is to that challenge, which brought changes in social constructs and questioned gender roles and family ideals, that this examination will turn next, with a shift from the visual art of Lilian Hale to the texts of Nancy Hale.

### Part 3: Nancy Hale's Writing and the Transition to Modernism

#### The Beginnings

Nancy Hale's writing career emerged from a childhood surrounded by art and the sensitive awareness of artist parents. The environment nurtured Nancy Hale's own artistic sensibilities. In addition to shaping her as an artist, her background was a frequent subject for Hale's stories. The tales of her New England childhood often describe the particular details of her life in the studios of her parents. The visual sensibility that she acquired as the child of two artists underlies her powerful descriptive powers, allowing Hale to paint a vivid fictional image of the characters of her era. Philip and Lilian Hale offered a world of rich sensory impressions to their daughter, who, when asked some years later why she wrote, replied that she *had* to, as though instead of four limbs, she had five: " 'It's the other thing I do besides walking around and talking and so on. No use speculating what I'd do if I didn't write. It's just part of how I operate'" (Friddell, "Spontaneous").

Nancy Hale relied heavily upon the sensory skills which were hers through both nature and nurture. She wrote of her mother's visual sensitivity:

She could never get used to the idea that most people don't use their eyes except to keep from running into things. She never learned not to feel wounded when, for example, she'd made some charming arrangement of flowers for the table or placed a yellow chair in a telling position against a rose toile curtain, and not one person at the party for which the effect had been planned made any comment. "Nobody liked it!" she'd wail. I had to keep persuading her that other people didn't see what she saw. "You mean they didn't *see* it? But it was right in

front of them,” she’d cry with an incredulity undiminished over the years. (“Eyes and No Eyes” 57)

In writing of her mother’s superior visual ability, Hale demonstrates her own visual sensitivity. Lilian Hale recorded in her journal the artistic inspirations she encountered. She wrote that one “ought to note down any effect whether simple or otherwise that is beautiful. To-day in Miss Waterman’s house at Folly Cove, a blank wall opposite the front door was hung a cotton print with a great Persian pattern sometimes called Palm leaves” (SSC, HFP 94.18, entry dated 3 Aug.). On another page she described pictures she had seen at an exhibition: “Degas woman painted in black & brown against vivid green [...] Partial nude on yellow green sofa, maid combing her hair in peach waist (Peach & yellow green new & lovely combination) Degas. Woman trying on hat in somber olive green-brown. Salmon background on wall with deep blue floor” (SSC, HFP, 94.18). Whether expressed in descriptions or through her art, visual images were a part of Lilian Hale’s world. Nancy Hale recalled of her mother “...my mother never peered. She just stared, and her vision and the image met for what they were” (“Eyes and No Eyes” 55). Nancy Hale’s descriptive writing highlighted her own visual sensitivity, and the two artists demonstrated in separate media their fine-tuned appreciation for images. Nancy Hale wrote:

When my mother looked at things (and her life was given over to looking at things; in any unfamiliar house she used to keep crying “Look at that! Look at that!” about a chair, a picture, a china bowl of flowers, until she became embarrassed by the realization that nobody else joined her), she looked with a kind of innocent, once-born stare. I can see that now, too. She held her eyes very wide open and simply stared, as though confronted by the first day of creation.

Often she saw things quite differently from other people. Colors, for instance, appeared different to her from what they seemed to me to be. She would keep talking about a blue house on the road to Gloucester, and I couldn't imagine what she was talking about, and then one day we would be driving that road together and she would cry, "There's the blue house! Look at that!" I would look, and it would be white.

"You're so *literary*," my father and mother used to complain to me. This was in no sense a compliment but referred to the instantaneous reflex of reading into color what I figured it had to be, instead of seeing it for what—in that light—it was. ("Eyes and No Eyes" 55)

Despite her self-deprecatory description of her own visual sensibilities, Nancy Hale's recollections reveal both a sensory awareness and an understanding of the artist's thinking. Like her parents, she exhibits a unity of senses. Reviewer Diana Loercher says that Nancy Hale "...models her literary style on that of the artist's: using naturalistic detail to suggest psychological truths and color to create emotional atmosphere [...] she writes with the authority and sensitivity of an insider." Nancy Hale writes with the eye of an artist; in particular, her memoirs of life with her parents connect their visual artistry with the printed word. Nancy Hale studied art after completing Boston's Winsor School, but she repeatedly stresses her layman's understanding in comparison to her mother:

On dark days she always called off a portrait sitting. She said she couldn't see anything when it was dark. Her eyes were certainly very different from lay eyes. When she and I went out shopping together, I could peer into the dark recesses behind a shopwindow [sic] and make out all sorts of objects—loaves of

bread or garden rakes or magazines or whatever we might be looking for—while my mother, confronted by anything in deep shadow, would all her life simply say, “I can’t see a thing.” (“Eyes and No Eyes” 52)

Nancy Hale’s textual images are strengthened by her active use of senses beyond the visual, as this passage from “My Mother’s Solitudes” demonstrates. In it she describes a moment spent with Lilian Hale after her mother moved to Virginia during the last years of her life, to be nearer her daughter:

We sat together then for a while before she got up to make tea, in one of those long silences when tiny sounds become brilliantly distinct—the occasional *clunk* of the electric clock on the wall of the kitchenette in that small, peaceful apartment; the creak, as my great-grandfather’s sea chest in the parlor settled a bit; the sound of a chunk of wet snow as it slid off the roof onto more wet snow; the sound of a car passing outside, coming to us muffled, as though from far away. (42)

The above passage, filled with sound, illustrates Nancy Hale’s connection to senses beyond the visual in the creative process. Her artistic inheritance was nurtured by an upbringing steeped in impressions of life. She says of her parents, “My mother Lilian was a great painter, but [... my father] was intellectual as well as artistic, and he was a bigger, rounder character. He was a dear man and a brilliant conversationalist. He was essentially a literary man” (“Interview”). He demonstrated the multiple artistic abilities which were a Hale family trait. Lilian Hale was the superior visual artist of the two, but Nancy Hale admired Philip Hale’s capabilities with different media forms. Her own first job in New York demonstrated her similar artistic inheritance. Hired by the art department of *Vogue*, Nancy Hale was quickly transferred

to editorial. She commented in an interview that usually someone who is truly talented in one art form demonstrates ability in other artistic areas as well (Loercher).

Philip Hale wrote about art from a critic's standpoint, discussing images and artistic technique, whereas Nancy Hale created narrative with an enhanced visual element, provoking images for the audience through the detailed descriptive elements in her writing. Nancy Hale's particular capabilities allowed her to avoid what media theorist W.J.T. Mitchell describes as the difficult struggle for writers in answering the question, "How do we say what we see, and how can we make the reader see?" (*Picture Theory* 114). The answer to Mitchell's question lay, for Hale, in a sensory blend of textual and visual elements. Her success as a writer emerged from the intensive perceptivity she inherited from her parents, in addition to her experience in a changing world that she felt challenged to interpret. Both elements were essential to her fictional creation of a new kind of woman.

The highly visual and perceptive world of Nancy Hale's childhood surrounded by art, contributed to her artistic representation of ideas and images through words. The New England childhood, which Hale described in so many stories, provided a before-picture for the audience to measure against the turmoil of modern thinking that also appeared in her fiction. Hale revealed her entire life in her work, creating a textual map of her intense personal struggles. Writer May Sarton wrote in a review of *The Life in the Studio*, Nancy Hale's memoir of her parents, that Hale's recall of the Boston of her youth had the effect of a "...Vuillard, one of those nostalgic interiors, a domestic scene...the easel, snow falling outside, a child in bed with a cold, the house in Dedham. As in a Vuillard what emanates from minute detail lovingly transcribed, is a breath of poetry, a poignant humanity. Dear vanished world, brought back to us alive in Miss Hale's burning glass!" (16).



Sarton's comparison of Nancy Hale's writing to an artist's paintings is inspired by the use of descriptive details that allow the audience to build mental images. Hale's stories are filled with vivid scenes, such as this one of her father's evenings at home: "He liked to spend the early evenings before the fire with my mother and, after she had gone to bed, sitting in his study in a barrel chair with a swinging side arm, drawing under a blue bulb shaded by a paper-clipped sheet of paper. He would be copying the drawings of Ingres, Watteau, and Michelangelo, the way a pianist perpetually practices..." ("My Mother's Solitudes" 38). Hale constructs her recollections as an artist plans the details of a composition. In a particularly sensitive description of childhood days spent sick in bed with her mother drawing nearby, rather than relying on visual elements, Hale highlights her own removal from her mother by relying upon sound rather than sight, the only part of her mother allowed to her in her illness:

From far away in the back of the house came faint domestic sounds—the coal range being shaken down, the black iron door to the oven opened and shut. I have no recollections of the hum of a vacuum cleaner. Somehow things got done about the house, but not by my mother. Her mornings were, properly, for work. The sounds of her working made a principal part of that tiny accenting to the snowy silence, and I could identify each sound.

There was the sharp, steady sawing of charcoal (sharpened to a needle point with a razor blade) up and down against the sheet of Strathmore board on my mother's easel as she worked on a snow scene from the windows of the front hall that, with the aid of a wardrobe and a chest of drawers, my father used as a dressing room. There would come a pause in the sawing, and a faint rattle, while she rummaged around in the blue-edged box that French charcoal came in. A

clack—she had dropped something on the floor. If it was charcoal, it fell with a small explosion. Then a scratchy, rubbing sound, which was the careful filing of the sides of her stick of charcoal against the board covered with fine sandpaper which had a handle to keep one's fingers clean. A pause. Then would recommence the sawing of the point drawn rhythmically up and down. I would go back to Miss Bronte, or make a stab at arithmetic, but every now and then I would give myself over again to rest in the long morning's stillness.

Sometime near noon, the day's letters would come pouring in through the slot in the front door, onto the hall floor, with a splash. ("My Mother's Solitudes" 40)

Hale describes a childhood of comfort and nurture. The importance of the visual world to this child of two artists is apparent from her earliest recollections, yet this particular writing relies heavily on the sense of sound. The final phrase, "with a splash," invokes visual image, sound, and even perhaps, touch. The importance of such clear capturing of impressions in narrative lies in their ability to present an isolated moment that the audience not only feels and believes, but also visualizes. Hale's vignette about cleaning out her mother's studio after her parents have died provides a clear image of this family's world for the reader. She describes the accumulation of a life of work:

"All this junk," my husband calls it, as he views the half-empty pots of glue and linseed oil and turpentine; the balsa-wood plane models, broken, my son made while my mother was painting him; coils of wire used on boats for some purpose; cigar boxes of dried up paint tubes; the conch shells in the still-life compositions that was the last thing my mother painted before she died; the rotted leather trunks full of photographs mounted on cards in the Victorian manner, of ladies in

bustles, gentlemen with beards, once somebody's friends but now forever unknown; a yellow luster vase; a pair of desiccated rubber gloves for handling the etching plates in an acid bath; a pile of old *Transactions* of the Bronte Society; several palettes, still set, the blobs of paint dried as hard as multicolored marbles; plaster casts, damaged, of Aphrodite, of a della Robbia *bambino*, of an *ecorche*—a model of the nude stripped to show the muscles; a pile of oil pochades my father painted on one of his infrequent visits away from his Boston Studio... (*Life* 3-4)

The passage is filled with memories conveyed through objects of significance for the artists.

Literary theorist Northrup Frye describes the importance for the writer of successfully painting a scene using words: "...the poet's work is not perfectly 'done' until that moment when the reader, traveling the line of text, becomes a spectator, seeing at one pulse beat the 'single visualizable picture'" (qtd. in Erdman 107-108). Nancy Hale paints with words the image of the studio. The scene focuses on items whose value has ended like her parents' lives, indicated by descriptives like "dried-up," "rotted," "dessicated," [sic] and "damaged." The worn objects merge with human form as she mentions the Victorian photographs of people, "once somebody's friends but now forever unknown." She remembers the human part of the studio, the artists, clarified in her memory through items which she handles as she reflects: "a set palette—as like my mother as a photograph—[hanging] from a nail on the wall as though it were her shield" ("The Other Side" 88).

Nancy Hale's stories preserve her parents and her past—the objects of the studio are tangible reminders of two people who shaped her. Roberta White describes the special demand of writing about artists: "Virtually every novel depicting an artist presents a challenge to the novelist to exercise her visual imagination...In general, the challenge of portraying a visual artist

inspires these novelists to write works that are rich in color imagery and visual descriptions” (16). Hale meets the particular challenge of writing about artist parents by drawing on all her senses, at times even relying heavily on textural description: “rotted leather trunks,” “desiccated rubber gloves,” and “blobs of paint dried as hard as multicolored marbles” (4-5). Production of the visual text is rooted in her childhood familiarity with the objects inhabiting and the feelings evoked by the studio.

Hale’s work, in fact, can be analyzed in visual art terms. Writing with painterly wording is defined as “pictorialism” by Jean H. Hagstrum. The term assumes the creation of a visual image through language that emerges as more than simply descriptive literary elements. The details of a pictorial writing, according to Hagstrum, must be ordered in a way that allows the reader to create the mental picture, and the significance of the image must emerge without authorial cues. The painterly quality of Hale’s fond recollections surpasses mere descriptive detail. Nancy Hale often speaks the painter’s language, but in terms which, while not a usual part of the reader’s vocabulary, are understandable for the audience from their context.

Reviewer Diana Loercher describes the technique, saying that Hale “...models her literary style on that of the artist’s: using naturalistic detail to suggest psychological truths and color to create emotional atmosphere. [...] Whether she is discussing a single painting, a movement or the artistic imagination, she writes with the authority and sensitivity of an insider.” This can be as simple as the previous comparison of the paint on a palette to colorful marbles, a similarity which only a child well acquainted with both items would recognize. Hale draws on her literary and her artistic skills in her writing, the same pair of abilities possessed by her father.

Literature was partnered with art for Nancy Hale during the hours she spent reading, while posing for her parents. Her earliest visual memories, transferred onto paper, reach back

nearly as early as her mother's first drawings of her (figure 70). Nancy Hale's description of one such early memory, which follows, is almost primordial in its dreamlike haziness:

Of the house where we lived until I was four I can remember only certain effects of light, but I can remember it very well in terms of where the light came in. It is as if those infant years were lived in a dark box with holes cut in it; the holes, the arrangement of the holes, what I saw outside the holes are all that remains.

For example, I can remember my grandfather, who died when I was not quite three, as an immense shape filling the oblong of the front door. I am part way down a flight of stairs; my mother stands at the bottom opening the door; but we are shadowy and I feel rather than see us. What I am looking at is that huge silhouette—he was six feet four—against the outdoor sunshine of the porch, the path, the garden.

It is the same with my nursery. I lie in my crib in the left-hand rear corner of the dark cube; there are two windows, rectangles of light that fades and is brought up again... (3)

Thus begins *A New England Girlhood*, Nancy Hale's album of family pictures. The stories shape a literary response to *A New England Boyhood*, the 1893 work of the grandfather she describes above, Edward Everett Hale. Nancy Hale's collection was published a half century after her grandfather's, and reviewer Charles Poore reports in *The New York Times* that "the social anthropologists will doubtless find valuable material" in it. It was Hale's ninth book, written reflectively about a childhood which was a model for peace, beauty, and artistic production. She had weathered many storms before the calm gaze back in time at the New

England past that was so deeply ingrained in her being. The audience travels back, through Hale's stories, to a time entirely different from our own that she describes in passages like this one reliving rail travel:

In those days we traveled by train. As we jolted, jerked, bucketed along, I sat beside my mother, on the gritty red plush seat, with the window open because the weather was so hot. Blasts as from an oven came in the window, laden with cinders from the engine. My mother kept her veil down. Sometimes I would get a cinder in my eye; then the rite was always the same: "Close your eyes, darling. Don't rub them. Lift the lid by the eyelashes with your fingers and let it slide up against your lower lid. It'll come out. (*New England Girlhood* 10)

Nancy Hale's reflections lure the reader into events that are foreign today, although less than a century separates us from them.

Figure 71 shows Nancy Hale during the general period of the train ride with her mother, a time when she also posed frequently for her parents. She quietly gazes from her seat in a straight, hard Windsor chair. Her dark hat provides a focus for the drawing in addition to the carefully detailed hands clasped in the surrounding white space. Lilian Hale's deletion of less significant details calls attention to such focal points and results in large areas of unmarked white paper. Nancy Hale does not look happy in the picture, but a few years later she found her own relief when she insisted on being allowed to read when she posed. From that time forward, her eyes are downcast as her parents create images of their daughter, immersed in the world of fiction that came to dominate her life.

Nancy Hale continually explores her memories of Boston in her fiction. She recalls deliveries from the epicurean fixture S.S.Pierce, which she quickly asserts is pronounced Perse

by a true Bostonian. She describes the sounds of events she cannot see, and the visual image of the things she can:

...the back door would be flung vigorously open, steps would stamp into the kitchen from the entry, and bang! That reassuring crash of a big Pierce's delivery box, with slot handles, onto the kitchen table would be followed by the smaller bangs of its contents rapidly being taken out and set down. "Pierce's!" the man would call with a certain hearty, unvarying cheerfulness, and we would rise from the table, napkins in hand, and rush out into the kitchen to see him, snow all over his shoulders, face crimson, taking the last things out of the box—the crock of strawberry jam, the wooden tub of butter—and preparing to depart on his long, lonely route. "Do let me give you something—a cup of coffee," my mother would cry, but he always shook his head and laughed and said, "If I stopped going, I'd freeze to death when I went out again." Then the back door slammed, and the sound of a horse's snort, the sound of runners would be heard; for what always happened on those bitter days when the local tradesmen failed us was that Pierce's, unable to get its auto trucks through, either, hired sleighs from livery stables and got through anyway with the delivery—a standard that, for me at least, easily rivaled the dashing boasts of the U.S. Mail. (*New England Girlhood* 91-92)

The childhood memories recalled in Nancy Hale's stories, and the artworks created by her mother of her youth (figure 72) yielded to images of teenage years. She wrote of the tarnished reality of the social world that she found as she grew to adulthood, so different from what she expected. Nancy Hale romanticized her parents' glimmering accounts of evenings out, and she was disappointed by the reality of the debutante parties that she began to attend, saying, "...it

was quite another world that I encountered: a sedate world, painstakingly simple, lined with patronesses, policed by chaperones, decorous, unostentatious, and pleasant. But juxtaposed ideas sometimes do not conflict at all; it was some time before it occurred to me that the parties I attended bore little or no relation to the land of glitter and glory I had imagined my parents going off to..." (*New England Girlhood* 59). Figure 73, Lilian Hale's impression of Nancy Hale as a teenager, shows the fashionably bored attitude of the young social elitist whom Hale described: "We wanted to be world-worn and decayed, and so we escaped to go slumming, wearing our most blasé expressions" (60). She wrote regretfully of the loss of the dream world her father's stories of evenings out had provided:

When at last it emerged into my consciousness that this life, though busy, was not at all the Boston of wit, gaiety, and sparkle that my father's stories had, with my collaboration, created, the realization was accompanied by a feeling of bewilderment and of resentment. For I was left with a whole airy metropolis on my hands, shimmering, inappropriate, iridescent, fitting nothing, as if I held a fabulous ruby necklace that had been declared bogus. What could you do with it? Where could you put it? (60)

Hale wished instead for the "Readville Stars" of her father's story, representing the glimmering unknowns in life. Despite her father's lively accounts of social evenings, her parents never actually enjoyed leaving home, but their daughter became a sensation as a debutante in Boston. Although she sought the limelight, many years later Hale reflected upon the positive qualities of her childhood home: "With my feet planted somewhere else, outside, I could all at once turn, and see New England for the marvel she is" (SSC, NHP, 26.4, from a lecture called "The Boston Girl" marked "1970?"). The youth of the period, however, were drawn to a more



vibrant image. Said Hale, “To people in their twenties at that time, from all over the country, New York spelt freedom. We felt New York had everything—in art, in music, in letters, in gaiety, in release from convention.” But years later, from a more mature viewpoint, she concedes, “Almost right away, however, on visits back home I heard myself remarking, ‘You know, I can’t seem to think what I was rebelling against’” (SSC, NHP, 26.4, “The Boston Girl”). Hale repeatedly wrote with fondness for New England, describing that subject with none of the critical aloofness of the modern age. Instead, she rendered the first world that she understood with homely wisdom:

...the dear departed dowdy fashions sold at ‘The Boston Store’; the Yankee fishermen who didn’t think it worthwhile to learn to swim, not with them boots on; the up-and-down Yankee housewife who saved string and egg crates as perfectly good, for gracious’ sakes; the Yankee storekeeper who wouldn’t stock turkey red cotton because it was in too great demand; to say nothing of the concomitant, nowadays unfashionable virtues like thrift, taciturnity, intransigence, and minding your own business—who remembers it now?” (SSC, NHP, 26.4)

Her recollections are regional representations of New England and its people, and they incorporate a good share of the discomfort of youth. Nancy Hale felt socially awkward until her transformation into a debutante. After that period of social blooming, like so many of her generation, Nancy Hale found excitement in New York City, but the exhausting pace of the modern age never brought the same contentment as her New England girlhood.

## The New York Moderns

Lilian Westcott Hale and Nancy Hale relocated at the beginnings of their careers, each choosing a city that was an influential center for her media form, and consequently, a serious proving ground for her work. Nancy Hale's move from Boston to New York City in 1928 was as defining for her writing career as Lilian Hale's move to Boston had been for her art career. In a sense, Nancy Hale's relocation to a more progressive environment reversed her mother's shift to the conservative art center of Boston. Lilian Hale had avoided the questionable influence of working with a New York artist, choosing instead the more conservative art center which valued academic artistic standards while other centers became increasingly experimental. Nancy Hale challenged previous standards in search of new ideals. The Hale women's choices about where to pursue their art corresponded to the beliefs of their periods. Lilian Hale avoided an unacceptable situation by moving to Boston, whereas Nancy Hale exercised her own agency in choosing to live in New York. Nancy Hale's move to New York brought her into an atmosphere distinctly different from her Boston roots. Her childhood had provided her with a wealth of stories from her parents along with her own vivid memories. She was confident in her talents, having grown up with the artistic encouragement of a family that had long respected ability in women as well as in men. These two different worlds formed the setting for many of Hale's finest works of fiction. She wrote with fondness of her New England childhood, and the adult experiences that she described in her fiction derived from her move to New York City.

The year 1928 was a turning point for Nancy Hale. It was the year of her first marriage, the year she began her career, and the year that she moved from her childhood home. Despite her love for New England, she welcomed the new freedoms of the 1920s in New York City. An indication of her break with tradition is reflected in Hale's choice of a wedding gown in pale

pink velvet with a headpiece draped around her face “like a red cross nurse”<sup>50</sup> (figure 74). The groom, Taylor Scott Hardin, appealed to Hale’s sense of style. A candid photo essay on men’s clothing, which appeared in *Vanity Fair* (figure 75), featured Taylor Hardin at center bottom, dressed in hunting tweeds.<sup>51</sup> He was tall, lanky, and meticulous about his appearance. An anglophile and a devout horseman, Hardin favored custom-made clothing from London tailors. In addition to his natty appearance, he was a Southern aristocrat whose spending habits provided an attractive antithesis, in Nancy Hale’s eyes, to the penurious New England of her youth. She wrote to Lilian Westcott Hale before her marriage, of a trip by train to see Hardin in Washington, D.C., where his parents lived: “Taylor was at the gate, and very cute in a black coat lined entirely with mink. He didn’t have the Stutz with him, so we came up in his mother’s Packard driven by the chauffeur” (SSC, NHP, 6.7, 21 Nov. 1927). The trip was filled with parties, and Hale related to her mother that “...a man, Captain Partridge, asked me to come to tea the next day (Sunday) on the President’s yacht, the “Mayflower,” and bring Taylor. We went, next day, and it was very amusing, lots of attractive men, mostly in the state department. We were shown over the boat, which is so swell it hurts...” (SSC, NHP, 6.7, 21 Nov. 1927).

Nancy Hale Hardin fit smoothly into the New York whirl, which was so different from the sedate life of Boston. The cultural standards of Victorianism had already encountered dazzling disturbances by the time the young bride traveled to the center of modern thinking with her new husband in 1928. This was the world that F. Scott Fitzgerald had immortalized in both *This Side of Paradise* (1920) and *The Great Gatsby* (1925), using what Paula Fass describes in

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<sup>50</sup> Morton Interview. At family gatherings, Fredson Bowers, Nancy Hale’s third husband, was often heard to say this of the photographs of Hale’s first wedding.

<sup>51</sup> This clipping is a torn remnant revealing only the information given. It is stored in Taylor Hardin’s personal papers; property of the author.

*The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920's*, as "...the double technique of shocked sensibility and the implicit contrast between a formerly stable world and the loss of that world." Fass says that "...Fitzgerald juxtaposed the richness of old dreams and the emptiness of dreams realized in the new world," to establish his, "...powerful comparison [...] between a former stability and the flux of the present" (27). New York was the heart of the American literary culture, and the temper of the time had been influenced by the major factors of industrialization, urbanization, and World War I. The social climate was exciting and full of fresh ideas. The American expatriates found Europe to be more free and welcoming, but groups within America were also expressing a sense of progress and optimism. There was a "spirit of emancipation, innovation, and newness" (Huggins 52). Groups who had been deprived previously of opportunity recognized the moment to speak for change. Women and African Americans were the most outspoken advocates for social innovation, working from similar motivations. Nathan Irvin Huggins describes the period for blacks in *Harlem Renaissance*: "...radicals were already serving notice that the Negro of postwar America was going to be far more militant than his prewar brother. The *Messenger* had insisted that the 'new style' Negro would not accept accommodation or ignore grievances even in the interest of the war. The Negro would no longer 'turn the other cheek,' be modest and unassuming" (53). Their goals overlapped women's with the predominant requirement of social equality. The Harlem Renaissance also reflected the broader literary atmosphere during the nineteen twenties and thirties, with its heightened emphasis on unity and experimentation. As African Americans organized themselves intellectually, producing an outpouring of art forms, from their pride emerged an entity called the New Negro, a persona which fought against past inequalities and demanded rights (Pohl 350-351).

The expectations of the New Negro bore similarities to those of the New Woman. The New York moderns questioned established ideas, inviting sharp conflict from the large conservative element determined to maintain tradition in a transitional society. The New Woman embodied a range of goals intended to advance her cause. In *The American New Woman Revisited: A Reader, 1894-1930*, Martha Patterson defines her as “a suffragist, progressive reformer, prohibitionist, or flapper,” noting that “her emergence signaled a tidal change in women’s roles[...]. The rise of the American New Woman represents one of the most significant cultural shifts of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries” (1).

Nancy Hale pursued a career in New York, and she adopted the moral shift toward new sexual freedom for women. The genteel traditions of her Boston youth had restricted women to a domestic setting. Nancy Hale demonstrated the New Woman’s challenging spirit, and her struggles brought conflict to her relationships, about which she wrote. Hale grappled in her fiction with such modern themes as troubled marriages that could be terminated by divorce, the new position women occupied in the world, as well as the issues of mental illness and substance abuse. Modern writers rejected the domesticity endorsed by their mothers in favor of new options. Willa Cather had created strong and independent women in *O Pioneers* and *My Antonia*; Edith Wharton described the upper class of turn-of-the-century New York City in *House of Mirth* and *The Age of Innocence*. Nancy Hale followed them with her descriptions of the pleasures and the difficulties of being a woman in a changing world, her characters embracing the freedoms of New York City and making mistakes in managing them.

## The New Woman

Robert Riegel opens his profiles called *American Feminists* with a description of the nineteenth century woman who received an elementary education and looked forward to marriage and children. Her position in life depended upon her husband's capabilities, and she valued pure character and spirituality (1-5). The twentieth century's New Woman embodied a different set of aims in her modern rejection of tradition. The evolution of the New Woman took place between the end of the nineteenth century and the 1920s, by which time she was a force, particularly in New York City. Patterson recognizes an essay by Sarah Grand with a rebuttal by antifeminist writer Ouida, as the starting point for public awareness of the emerging "cultural phenomena" (29). Grand's essay, published in 1894, contends that women all around the world were waking up, and "...like healthy hungry children unable to articulate, they began to whimper for they knew not what. They might have been easily satisfied at that time had not society, like an ill-conditioned and ignorant nurse, instead of finding out what they lacked, shaken them and beaten them and stormed at them until what was once a little wail became convulsive shrieks..."(30-31). The essay's publication in the prominent Boston journal *North American Review*, which focused on intellectual discussion of national issues, brought the idea of the New Woman into the public eye (Patterson 29).

Social reformer Lillian W. Betts wrote of the New Woman in an essay of 1895: "She is described as smoking, drinking, and demanding what she calls liberty. This seems to be not the liberty of law, but of license; the right to live without restraint" (135). Despite the negative press, Betts described another kind of woman emerging: "There is a new woman, the product of evolution, the result of domestic, social, and commercial changes" (135). The New Woman that Betts described was a growing entity with far more depth than the press had credited her. She

was developing awareness for worldly issues which had been denied to her in the past (135-136). The New Woman of 1920s New York evolved over decades. Banta defines three female stereotypes in place at the turn of the century: the Charmer, the Outdoors Girl, and the New England woman. These three were marked respectively by engaging personality, physical athleticism, and solid intelligence. They ultimately merged, according to Banta, into the New Woman (47-48).

The New Woman questioned the Victorian cultural code with its strict behavioral standards. Twentieth century historian William E. Leuchtenburg cites her first appearance in literature as Ibsen's heroine Nora in *A Doll's House* (1879). Leuchtenburg says that when Nora "...walked out into the night, she launched against male-dominated society a rebellion that has not ended yet. The 'new woman' revolted against masculine possessiveness, against 'over-evaluation' of women 'as love objects,' against being treated, at worst, as a species of property" (159). Nora marked the literary beginning of women's battle for equality; her actions announced the need for change.<sup>52</sup> By the 1920s, women sought equality on political, economic, and sexual fronts, refusing to be restricted to the home as Victorian women had been. World War I contributed significantly to the atmosphere surrounding the struggle for new freedoms, as young Americans, made aware in harsh wartime terms of their own mortality, on returning home, exhibited a wild, hedonistic zeal for life (Fass 18-19).

The women in Hale's fiction embodied changing social constructs; they were career women with options that women had never been allowed. In her work about the mobility of the modern woman, Wendy Parkins writes, "The mobile New Woman was a woman not only

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<sup>52</sup> Patterson also credits Ibsen with providing the inspiration through his criticism of conventional roles for women. The American New Woman, according to Patterson took shape from international models (5).

moving *towards* new destinations but also moving *away* from one location in particular: the home and the many meanings associated with it—as a material space, a domain of labour, a realm of experience, a network of relations...” (78). The change in the New Woman’s perspective on the roles of wife and mother brought conflict with its attempt at social restructuring. Despite her recognition as an intellectual feminist, Charlotte Perkins Gilman described a communal mothering experience in *Herland* (1915), about which Rowbotham writes, “...such social maternalism was never able to take into account those women seeking freedom from the oppressive aspects of maternity” (109). It was of those women and that oppressive element that Hale wrote in her popular novels of the 1940s.

Hale’s intention to make her way in a man’s world was a serious and completely natural aim for a young woman who had watched her own mother work all her life, despite Victorian constructs which restricted women’s activities. The same strong sense of purpose that Nancy Hale demonstrated in pursuing her writing career was a prominent aspect of the New Woman of the 1910s and 1920s. In 1932, Bett Hooper’s book *Virgins in Cellophane: From Maker to Consumer Untouched by Human Hand* provided a humorous glance at the new working woman, revealing both her positive and her negative traits. Hooper’s narrative is presented through a secretary’s series of letters to a “Constituent.” She says that “A working girl has so little time to be herself. She has to say ‘yes’ all day when she’s dying to say ‘no’; and at night, it’s vice versa” (10). The clear game-playing in both the working and the dating scenes is more attractive to the narrator than the idea of marriage, which she complains, “...ought to offer something more exciting than looking forward every Tuesday night to bridge and chicken salad” (10). The narrator recognizes the direct effects of war on the society, but in the hedonistic mood of her era, allows it no serious reflection: “After forty-eight months of headlines, bandages, casualties and



cheese-cloth floats, we returned to abnormalcy.” She describes the period’s turbulence for women, saying, “...I couldn’t seem to get my balance. Everything was a caricature of itself and from that time on, it has been impossible to tell villains from vicars, vamps from virgins” (17).

Hooper’s book demonstrates the social changes through both the text and the accompanying amusing pen and ink drawings of prominent illustrator James Montgomery Flagg. Two drawings from *Virgins in Cellophane* (figures 76 and 77) show the evolution of the American female from Victorian to modern. The first scene reflects Victorian thinking in its amusing caption: “My grandmother once confessed to me that she let my grandfather kiss her the night before they were married” (73). The second drawing depicts the New Woman, later in the text and in time, gaping in fear at baby carriage and cleaning tools. The narrator’s words demonstrate the conflicts of the period for women. She has been shaped by a different set of standards than the ones that she has adopted, as shown in her evaluative comment about a woman in power: “There are even some people who do not approve of women in Congress, but I think it is all right if they all look like Mrs. Kahn because although Mrs. Kahn has a very good brain, she would not take any man’s mind off his business” (113). Mrs. Kahn has accomplished a great deal for a woman, yet instead of praising her power, the narrator measures the woman by her appearance. The comment indicates the difficulty of rejecting old ideas without clear replacements for them.

Hooper’s text demonstrates the class structure of the 1930s and the changing gender constructs. *Virgins in Cellophane* is the writing of a working girl, more educated than a factory worker, but socially inferior to the debutante whose role she is allowed to play when delivering paperwork in her employer’s chauffeur-driven limousine. The narrator exhibits the period’s fascination with the elite. She describes her feelings about riding in the limousine: “I know why

so many debutantes look bored. There's just something about looking through a limousine pane that gives one a sense of power" (30). The working girl continues, "Sometimes I meet the eye of a passerby and I smile wearily, with a little Vanderbiltish pose, as if to say that I would gladly exchange all my millions for just a tiny bit of human companionship" (30). Hooper's New Woman rejected her domestic role, and she admired the debutante society figure.

The world of the social elite was appealing for its Cinderella possibilities, and it was that world that Hale described along with her contemporaries. Fass points out that Fitzgerald's novel *This Side of Paradise* "Struck a responsive chord in the 1920s precisely because it strives to be naughty, sophisticated, and shocking" (26). The characters represented the same elevated, and at this point, admired social class that populated Hale's novels. Nancy Hale revealed the depths of the New Women, and she emphasized her specific interest in her female characters' relationships. Hale said that she wrote not just of "...women alone—you know, as workers, or wasters, or anything like that. My interest is in their relations with men. I think that should be clear" (qtd. in Gelder 10). The New Women in Nancy Hale's fiction were conflicted by their freedoms, but she revealed how far they had come.

Hale emerged from her solid New England background to become a representative of the urban phenomenon called the New Woman, and her stories record her experiences. The New Woman of the 1920s offended conservatives through the flamboyant breach of accepted traditions. The New Woman's goals were not limited to the workplace, but extended to attacking social restrictions on women's behavior wherever they existed. Instead of attempting, as Lilian Westcott Hale did, to work within the accepted structures, Nancy Hale defied such

patterns, following the tendency of the era to self-centered disregard for social authority.<sup>53</sup>

Nancy Hale provided a rich, heavily descriptive view of this modern woman emerging rebelliously from the cocoon of Victorian tradition. She did not set out to supply an historical record; however, she accomplished just that with her accounts of the life of the well-to-do, young career woman enjoying the freedom to compete in a man's world and aware of her own sexuality in a newly urbanized society. Depictions of the New Woman in literature by the era's popular male writers like Fitzgerald and Hemingway lacked the multiple facets of the conflicted women in Hale's narratives.

Hale's sophisticated characters were particularly well-suited for *The New Yorker*. She printed nearly eighty stories in the magazine during an association of more than thirty years. On 26 December 1931, Hale published her first short story there in the maiden name which she retained throughout her writing career. Entitled "Club Car," the story revolves around the only young, fashionable woman travelling on a train caught hastily on Christmas Eve, which "...wasn't a train to be proud of travelling on; it was even a little *déclassé*." Catching the train in haste indicates the woman's impetuous freedom, in opposition to the "middle-aged matrons, wearing toques made of artificial violets and children going down the aisle to the water cooler" (42). The young woman walks to the club car to smoke, where she says, "I became aware that I was not wanted. I became aware that I was doing something that wasn't done. I became aware that, thoroughly depraved through contact with dissolute extra-fare trains, I had violated a sanctuary. I had come into the club car, and I was a woman" (43). She is accustomed to more

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<sup>53</sup> In a chapter entitled "The Children of Our Discontent," Fass describes the youth of the 1920s as a representation of "the unhinging of the social order, and the social journals of the twenties were filled with an image of youth out of control, of energy released from social restraints, and of raw forces unleashed" (20). Fass describes the particular concerns of the period for women and the family.

luxurious travel accommodations, and in this lower-class train, the men consider her a sinister seductress. Her sole impropriety is smoking a cigarette in their male space.

“Club Car” juxtaposes old and new, Victorian and modern. The women on the train are confined by their maternal roles, while the young, free-thinking narrator asserts woman’s new position in the modern age. Hale may have gleaned her idea for the story from her involvement in a renowned advertising campaign of 1929. Women smokers in the 1920s were a matter of social consternation, until a crusade was launched to encourage female smoking. The progressive advertising campaign, *Torches of Freedom*, employed a behavioral approach, equating female smoking with powerful, elite role models. The campaign provided a repetitious association between cigarettes and freedoms formerly withheld from women. Eddie Bernays, the advertising wizard who engineered the offensive, matched the desires of the women of the period with the product he represented. The nephew of Sigmund Freud, Bernays spearheaded the use of psychological tactics in advertising. Michael Jones says in an article about the campaign, that Bernays “...intuitively understood that he had to attack traditional sources of authority. Since the taboo against women smoking was largely sexual—women who smoke were seen as sluts and whores—the way to expand the market was to denigrate sexual morality as repressive” (2). The equation mixed elite role models with derogatory morals in an effort to gain acceptability for behaviors which had previously been forbidden – like women smoking. A prominent photograph in the campaign (figure 78) shows the young, attractive Hardins, strolling down Fifth Avenue. Her cigarette is in her hand; his is clenched jauntily between his lips. The *Torches of Freedom* campaign focused on elite, debutante-types who occupied enviable social positions, like Nancy Hale Hardin, the name she used socially.

The issue of women smoking in public exemplifies the modern attitude which attacked restrictions on women's behavior. Bernays was paid to bring more women into the smoking habit which he accomplished by advertising New York's society women smoking and by connecting the habit with social freedom. Nancy Hale used the publicity stunt as a way to make money. She wrote to Lilian Westcott Hale that she had received \$10 for appearing in a photograph, and she had been offered the potential for far greater sums in the future. She wrote later about receiving more money from the ad campaign: "\$100 for signing my name to some sort of letter they are going to send to the editors of magazines asking them to give the idea of smoking on the street publicity, and I have a tentative agreement with them that if there is sufficient publicity I am to receive \$1000 for endorsing an advertisement [ . . . ] Pretty soft way to make money, isn't it?" (SSC, NH, 6.8). Sheila Rowbotham surveys the changes affecting women during the twentieth century in *A Century of Women*. She writes that: "A barrage of propaganda from advertisers presented American women with vision of personal freedom..." (161). The changing environment included a constant flow of consumer products, new mobility for women, and an undercurrent of sexuality.<sup>54</sup> The Torches of Freedom campaign targeted the New Woman. Nancy Hale was the image of the New Woman as shown in figure 79 (NH Papers, 6.8), a news clipping of Nancy Hale beside another featuring her mother. The paired images highlight the new freedoms which brought women conflict.

While Nancy Hale seized the new freedoms for women, Taylor Hardin found them less appealing. Six months after their wedding, he revealed his feelings about his wife's behavior in a letter to Lilian Westcott Hale. Hardin wrote: "Your daughter is the sensation of New York. Every man who meets her falls cold. So she has lots of fun going out to lunch, speakeasies, &

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<sup>54</sup> Rowbotham describes aspect of the period in terms of the daily life for women (161-171).

things with them. I'm glad she is having such a whirl. Goodness knows she deserves all the pleasure she can get; for life with me must be but a drab bore at best" (SSC, NHP, 100.33).

Despite the indication of early problems in their marriage, Taylor and Nancy Hardin produced a child, Mark Hardin, in March of 1930, when they had been married for a year and a half. A photograph from 1930 captures four generations of the family (figure 80). The elderly matriarch gazes away from the baby who occupies the center of the study. She sits beside her daughter, Lilian Hale, a handsome middle-aged woman holding the infant up for display. The third generation, Nancy Hale, touches her child's outstretched hand. The women's dress shows the progression of time, the march of the generations, from widow's black to Nancy Hale's sporty tartan. The baby, who is the reason for the gathering, is out of focus, his face a small blurred spot.

In the traditional photographs, this family appears happy, and other family pictures in figures 81 and 82 continue the history. The child, now a toddler, sits with his mother; they are carefully groomed. His father hoists the happy child onto his shoulder. They wear elegantly tailored clothes and smile for the audience. Figure 83 captures the same child several years later, dressed formally including top hat and gloves. He appears happy, healthy, and well cared for. These family pictures tell a story, but they fail to tell the entire story. They are contrived images, fabrications of lives filled with happiness. They leave out the marital unpleasantness, the broken home. A more complete story is available through the writing of Nancy Hale in texts which reveal more than the posed photographs.

Nancy Hale's stories and novels repeatedly draw upon her life as a talented working woman in New York City enjoying freedoms not experienced by women before. Fass says that the New Woman refused to be restricted to the traditional female roles of wife and mother. She

wanted satisfaction in her relationships with men (23), and she was no longer willing to stay in unsatisfying ones. New freedoms for women released them from their solidly codified role within the household, bringing instability to the traditional family structure. Leuchtenburg cites more than just women's roles as problems for the time: "For at least a century, the family had been losing many of its original social and economic functions; the state, the factory, the school, and even mass amusements robbed the family of functions it once had. The more that social usefulness was taken away from the family, the more marriage came to depend on the personalities of the individuals involved" (162). Nancy Hale rejected the traditional commitment of marriage, in favor of the new ideas and alternatives of her generation. Her letters to her mother in the months after her first child was born in March of 1930 indicate the emergence of the New Woman from the sequestering cocoon of Victorianism. She describes her social life: "Monday I dined with Peter Vischer, last night with Arthur Somers Roche the writer who is terrible and has taken a tremendous sneaker to me. Tonight I am going to dinner with Arthur Krock the editor of the Times, and tomorrow with Conde [Nast] (SSC, NHP, 6.9, 23 July 1930). Her longtime friend, Jungian analyst John Beebe, describes the era's effects on its players: "People were not ready to be that free—they were going faster than they could go. They were too far ahead of their time; she was all caught in it" (Interview).

The freedoms of the New Woman in New York provided the material for Hale's stories, which ran counter in moral tone to her New England childhood. She shifted throughout the next decade, between accounts of New England and the social world of New York's elite. Maxwell Perkins, the legendary editor at Scribner's, was an early admirer of her work, and he provided unflagging encouragement and support to Nancy Hale. In March of 1930, the month her son was born when Hale was twenty one years old, a letter to her mother indicated her delight at

Perkins's acceptance of one of her poems for publication.<sup>55</sup> She says, "I think Scribner's is an awfully nice place to have one's first poem come out. Tell Papa about all this and remind him that this is the first time I ever tried to get anything published" (SSC, NHP, 6.7). The poem's words show just how much Hale had already departed from the strict position of the Victorian woman, the role her mother played:

She hated him because he never made  
Upon her honour any slight attempt;  
She hated him because he never bade  
Her tell him of the dreams that she had dreamt.

He never gave her husband any cause  
For jealousy about philandering;  
But most of all she hated him because  
He was a gentleman in everything" (NH 6.8).

The words of the verse indicate a desire for advances from a man other than the woman's husband, and a disdain for social protocol. Rowbotham writes that Margaret Mitchell, author of *Gone with the Wind*, said in 1926, "that a *mix* of the bad and the good was essential for morale: 'I think a man who makes improper proposals is a positive necessity in a girl's life...' (169).

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<sup>55</sup> Maxwell Perkins, from his position as a Scribner's editor, wielded influence over the company's magazine as well. Berg's biography of Perkins notes that one of the editor's writers, Erskine Caldwell, in his determination to publish in *Scribner's Magazine*, "considered Maxwell Perkins as the company's major power and sent his stories through him" (154). Perkins published Hale before she produced her more mature and significant works, the same method that he used to conscript Ernest Hemingway to Scribner's. Perkins agreed to publish a satire which he felt would not sell so that he might be allowed to also publish Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*. Nancy Hale may have gone through Perkins in approaching *Scribner's Magazine* as Caldwell did, and Perkins may have encouraged publication of the poem of which she speaks.



Hale's similar delight in the modern rejection of past standards did not compromise her aura of dignity. Perkins's biographer, Scott Berg, records the first meeting of the legendary editor and Nancy Hale during her first year in New York: "In 1928, Max Perkins had met Nancy Hale, the bright and beautiful granddaughter of Edward Everett Hale, the author of 'The Man Without a Country'" (206). Perkins's company, Scribner's, published her first book, *The Young Die Good*, with only minor changes, and a second novel as well. Both made little impact, but he related to their mutual friend Elizabeth Lemmon, that he had instantly recognized in Hale a writer of unusual talent: "—like you Virginians think a colt could run when he could barely stand. So I watched her and got us to publish her when she couldn't sell. Now she has a great name in the magazines, but she hasn't yet sold for us. So I want to be vindicated" (Berg 206). Hale supported herself through the poor sales of her first two novels, *The Young Die Good* and *Never Any More*, by working in the publishing world, first on the staff of *Vogue* and then at *Vanity Fair*. At night Hale wrote the stories to which Perkins refers, shifting between memories of her New England childhood and tales of New York life, perhaps seeking resolution of the tremendous disparity in the two worlds. She said of her continual return to childhood memories, "What interested me in writing them was to try to catch the reverberations from childhood that sometimes make it seem as if the first few years of all our lives constitute a riddle which it is a lifework to solve" (Introduction, *A New England Girlhood* xvi). The riddle of her own life intensified significantly with her move to New York.

Hale's first novel, *The Young Die Good* (1932), published by Scribner's when she was only twenty four, analyzes the experiences of the young, carefree elite in New York City. Although not the caliber of her later work, it begins her examination of the New York moderns. The story begins: "On top of the highest apartment-house on Park Avenue the largest possible

number of members of the most varied types of society were attending the largest party in New York.” Hale’s novel continues, “A strip-cartoonist would have drawn that apartment high and running off into impossible perspective, with a great bulge at the top to indicate that the penthouse was full to bursting” (1). The scene resembles Fitzgerald’s iconic images of the hedonistic era through descriptions of Gatsby’s parties. Hale’s heroine enters the mother-of-pearl accoutered ladies’ room of Porter Penn’s penthouse where a companion touches on cultural trends with her comment, ““Give me the good old days of heavy powdering [...] this continual washing to get the glow of youth is doing me in””(9). Hale’s young women explore the cabinets of the bathroom, finding “all sorts of fascinating tubes and jars within. All sorts and conditions of lipsticks were there and they made a mark with each one on the wall to see which color suited them best” (10). The feminine decadence describes the raucous era.

Both *The Young Die Good* and *The Great Gatsby* represent a period of debauchery, filled with characters devoid of social conscience. Hale’s heroine asks, ““Darling, do you know we aren’t making any sense?”” to which her new love responds, ““Why should we make sense? I mean, what would you do with sense once you’d made it...”” (40-41). As in *Gatsby*, illegal liquor lubricates the silly conversations. The apartment-hotel for women where Barry, the lead character, lives, demonstrates the conflicts involved in the transition from Victorian to modern New York. The hotel makes a meager effort to enforce a code of conduct, structured by a set of proprietary rules about liquor and young men intended to guide its lady guests. The rules function mostly to comfort families sending their girls off to the big city unchaperoned (44). In one passage, Hale describes, through a monologue, just what the city embodies for its restless inhabitants and offers an idea about dealing with it:

...New York is perhaps after all, only the circus that it has so often been compared to. It is a very good circus, very complete. It is a little too good. There is no time in any one's life to see all that this circus offers. When you come in to the circus you are blinded by lights and deafened by the shouts of the barkers. You are curious of what you will see in the inviting side-shows. What you see there may be amusing, perhaps shocking and perhaps only revolting. What I would say, however, is that if you listen to the adjectives thrown at you by all the barkers, if you go in to all the side-shows, you will inevitably miss the big lion act and the important tight-rope walking that are what you really came to see. Your only chance is to put your mind firmly upon what you came to the circus to witness, and to ignore the fat lady and the sword swallower and the dreadful blue man, and go directly to your seat in the main tent. You may be too early and have to sit and wait for the show, but when it is over you will have seen the circus, the real circus that is a great and exciting sight, and not merely have bewildered and even nauseated yourself with the strange spectacles in the side-shows. (51-52).

The heroine responds inanely to the extended metaphor: ““Darling, it's wonderful. Why, it's a philosophy”” (52). The circus metaphor describes a city which one character calls a ““...fake state of mind”” (78). The central couple in *The Young Die Good* rides in taxis to be together. Her hotel allows no men; he occupies only a room in another hotel, so she refuses to go to it for fear of being ejected by a hotel detective. Barry says, ““...there doesn't seem to be anything in this great big city for two people in love to do but take a taxi ride, and no place to go but the movies. One might as well be in Peoria”” (85).

*The Young Die Good* was Hale's first extended effort to express the feelings of a young woman in a rapidly changing world. Fass writes that the behavior of young women of the period was especially alarming to traditionalists who feared the potential for social disintegration that it indicated. The New Women upset social standards with their desire for "freedom—the right to self-expression, self-determination, and personal satisfaction. To traditionalists this smacked of immorality, self-indulgence, and irresponsibility" (23). While Lilian Westcott Hale hid within the walls of her home to maintain her social acceptability despite her career, Nancy Hale was an outspoken advocate of the new female sexual awareness. She described a teenage girl's first sensual stirrings in her 1934 story "Midsummer," which was repeatedly anthologized. Iconic *New Yorker* editor Katharine White referred to the story in a speech introducing Nancy Hale many years later, in January of 1959: "...like all the other *New Yorker* editors, I did know that our new Hale was a writer of great talent. Within three short years she was to write one of the great American short stories of our generation—the one titled 'Midsummer'" (SSC, NHP, 18.10). The story contains elements which define its era. It is the story of a wealthy young girl left at home with servants by her vacationing parents. She acts on an attraction to the Irish groom at her riding stable, combining a modern approach to sexuality with Hale's challenge to ethnic hierarchies (47). The Irish population was a socially inferior segment of the Boston of Hale's youth, yet her sixteen-year-old heroine does the unthinkable:

With some kind of instinctive simplicity, she went and stood against him, facing him, touching him, waiting for him to do something. He acted; he put one arm around her, holding the horses' reins with the other hand, and leaned and kissed her hard. For a moment she had the first relief she had had in weeks, and from that moment she wanted him more and more to touch her and to kiss her. After

his first reaction, Dan became very stilted, with a recollection of his 'place' and his job, but by this time the turmoil inside her had concentrated itself on him, and she would not allow him to remount his horse or help her mount hers; she threw her arms around him with a wild relief" (29).

The conflict between old and new values emerges when the girl's parents return from Europe, having received four letters about the relationship from locals. They see to the Irish groom's removal before they confront their daughter. They blame themselves for leaving her: "'It's really our fault that you fell into the power of this dreadful man'" (32). He is gone, and devastated, the girl roams outside after the family is in bed. Hale describes the moment: "Suddenly she pulled her nightgown off over her head and threw herself down on the wet turf. The smell of it filled her nostrils. She pressed her body violently against its softness and fragrance, and ran her fingers desperately into the damp earth" (33)—boldly erotic writing for the 1930s.

Nancy Hale's acceptance of the freedoms of New York was indicated in both her correspondence and her fiction. Stanley Coben says in *Rebellion against Victorianism: the Impetus for Cultural Change in 1920s America*, that the period's writers "...refused to comply with either conventional morality or accepted truths. As a result, some of them poked large holes in basic Victorian beliefs and values, leaving the foundation of Victorianism shaky and the defenders of Victorianism alarmed" (68). Nancy Hale Hardin rejected the Victorian concept of marriage in favor of the new, freer approach that surrounded her. Taylor Hardin's steady correspondence to Lilian Westcott Hale reflected an ambivalent attitude throughout his marriage, his moods dependent upon his wife's feelings of the moment. He frequently despaired of his situation, only to rejoice when his wife gave him her attention. Although Nancy Hale's longtime

friend Anne Freeman says that Hale described their marriage as open—French-style (Interview), that version differs from the indications in Taylor Hardin’s correspondence that such a lifestyle was his wife’s choice alone.<sup>56</sup> Hardin appears to be writing of his young bride in the following verse:

She was a wife who could not be a wife.  
She liked the great world’s gaities too well.  
She liked to lunch with men and hear them tell  
Her she was beautiful...  
Her conduct cut her husband as a knife  
Would do. And yet she did not care a straw.  
She only thought about her own content  
And laughed when people spoke of “moral law.”  
She said she could not change her temperament.  
She said that marriage had a ghastly flaw  
When women made of it imprisonment.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> In a letter to Lilian Westcott Hale dated 16 March 1929, only six months after his wedding to Nancy Hale, Taylor Hardin says, “Sometimes I wonder just what the devil a man gets out of marriage. I believe that often the only reason he gets himself into such a one-sided affair is that he can’t bear the idea of another man’s having the woman he loves. Then, often, he wakes up to find that marriage is certainly no solution to that qualm” (SSC, NHP, 100.33).

<sup>57</sup> The poem “Divorce” is a typed and undated document in Taylor Hardin’s papers, now in the author’s files. The fact that Hardin divorced only once lends credence to the fact that Nancy Hale was the subject.

Hardin bristled at the lapse in women's morals and the accompanying effects on marriage. Woman had traveled, at least in the opinion of the conservative element of society, full circle from her Victorian position as the cultural arbiter.

Nancy Hale's writing showed the dual influences of her New England upbringing and of the mood in the exciting modern Mecca of New York. Her work demonstrated the thinking and the conflicts of a questioning and a frequently argumentative age, and she indicated the often unsettling evolution of ideas from Victorian to modern. Hale's fiction highlighted the complexities of her Boston youth as a shaping force for her New York years. *New Yorker* editor and longtime friend William Maxwell remembered "Midsummer" and "The Bubble" as her best stories; they both threaten early twentieth century traditions. The overt sexuality of "Midsummer" has been discussed. Maxwell described "The Bubble" as "a young woman's absorption in her first child" ("Tribute" 227). The woman is absorbed, but it is disputable whether the subject of her attention is her child or herself. There is a hopeless quality to the story resulting from its examination of the destructive impact of modern freedoms on the family. "The Bubble" demonstrates the effects of the self-centered hedonism of the age on the most treasured human bond, that of mother and child. The mother in the story is only eighteen years old, and she has gone to her mother-in-law's large home in Washington, D.C. to have her baby. The story is Hale's usual blend of descriptive autobiography and fictional detail.<sup>58</sup> The narrator quickly and unapologetically tells the audience that she is in love with someone other than the baby's father:

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<sup>58</sup> In a letter of 28 Feb. 1930, NH writes to LWH about a luncheon party given for her by her mother-in-law in Washington, D.C. NH describes a similar gathering in "The Bubble" (SSC, NHP, 6.9).

I would weep, up there on the fourth floor, because I was so big and clumsy, and I felt as if I would never, never go dancing again, or walk along a red carpet, or wear a low-cut dress. The last time I had was one night when I went dancing at the old Montmartre with Tom and Eugene—I was in love with Eugene—and I had seen myself in a long mirror dancing and realized how fat I looked, and that was another reason I wanted to get away from New York and go have it in Washington. (20)<sup>59</sup>

Tom is her husband, but she loves the other man, Eugene, and she returns to New York eventually to see him. The rebellious nature of the New Woman is demonstrated in the narrator's rejection of the traditional marriage vows. The cool, impersonal pronoun *it*, used to refer to the unborn child, and the woman's desire to hide her condition, indicate her rejection of motherhood as well. After being indulged by her mother-in-law's purchases of baby clothes, gifts from her vast supplies of linens, and solicitous introductions to fashionable Washington mothers, the young woman goes into labor and on the way to the hospital in a taxi relates, "I hadn't worn my wedding ring since I fell in love with Eugene. I'd told my mother-in-law that I didn't like the feeling of a ring, which was true. But in the taxi, in the darkness, she took off her own wedding ring and put it on my finger. 'Dear child,' she said, 'I just won't have you going to the hospital with no ring.' I remember I squeezed her hand" (21). In one instant Hale captures the conflict in the modern break with Victorian tradition.

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<sup>59</sup> Correspondence between Taylor Hardin and his father, a respected Washington physician, indicates that Bernard Lauriston Hardin does not agree with his son's suggestion that Nancy Hardin should take up residence in Washington some time before the birth of the couple's child, but he ultimately agrees to his son's request (Author's files).



“The Bubble” was written more than two decades after the birth of Hale’s first child in Washington where she stayed at the home of her husband’s parents, a temporal lapse that she often exercised in creating her fiction. The story demonstrates the tremendous disparity in thinking between the generations during the period in which the episode occurred. Such moral differences are common between generations, but as Leuchtenburg points out about the years following World War I, “...it may be doubted that there was ever a time in American history when youth had such a special sense of importance.” He compares the divide to a fault in the earth. Young males had experienced the horrors of war, and “Young girls no longer consciously modeled themselves on their mother, whose experience seemed unusable in the 1920’s” (173). He notes that the young lived lives of irresponsible hedonism (174). Coben designates the 1920s as the first large scale rebellion against Victorian ideals, and he concludes that “The powerful assaults launched against Victorian culture during the twentieth century failed to replace most essential aspects of that culture with durable values, concepts, and institutions ...” (35). The modern movement offered freedom to experiment, but the people who experienced it had been raised to expect rules, and they spun helplessly, grabbing for something solid.

Another story of pregnancy, significantly entitled “To the Invader,” deals again with the opposition of the Victorian and the Modern worlds, and with the contrast of the two geographical settings which conflicted in Hale’s mind despite their commonality of deep-rooted ideals. “To the Invader” became the first of Hale’s ten O. Henry Award winners. Published in 1933, the story is told by a Northern woman visiting her husband’s Virginia family during the first stage of her pregnancy. The narrator says, “You could have a baby in the North, and it was all shopping and talk and scrubbed clean shaven doctors, and in the end a neat hospital and a white nurse. Or you could, by strange and dreamy mischance, be pregnant in the South, and join an army of

semi-tropic mothers, with gross arms and long hair, and become yourself a child-bearer..." (31). The narrative opens with Angelica lying in the southern bed, speculating about the future of her body: "She had her other hallucination now. She looked down at the straight narrow lines of her body lying under the heavy damp bedclothes. She was so little and flat that she only made a raised ribbon. But now she saw herself all bloated and huge, great with child, making an obscene hump in the middle of the bed with her stomach" (31). A review in the *New York Herald Tribune* summarizes the story as "a brief study of the hysteria of revolt rising in a slim Northern girl, pregnant and captive under the too solicitous and proprietary and hostile and so forth eyes of her Southern in-laws, whose women have always borne children, bulged and grown to bursting thereby" (Ferguson, SSC, NHP, 1.8). When her mother-in-law seeks confirmation that the girl is "expectin," she replies bluntly that she is indeed *pregnant*, at which "Mrs. Augustine coughed. That meant the word wasn't a nice one" ("To the Invader" 33-34).

Both of these stories of pregnancy oppose the traditional Victorian image of the woman as caregiver, guarding the safety of a loving home. The young pregnant women revile the distortion of their bodies by their condition, resenting the loss of their sexual appeal. Hale has emerged from Victorianism into modern society with values which reflect its hedonism. "The Bubble" tells the story of a young woman having her husband's child while involved with another man, in a direct demonstration of the New Woman's threat to traditional social values. Hale's character admits no remorse; indeed, she is open with the audience about her disloyal affection. Again, she is more concerned with her shape than with her pregnancy, saying, "I used to live in a kind of fever for the future, when the baby would have come and I would look nice again and go back to New York and see Eugene. [...] dreaming of the day when I would be size 12 and my hair would curl again and I would begin to have fun" (20). As is often the case with

Nancy Hale's stories, there are identifiable autobiographical elements in "The Bubble." By the time her own first child, Mark Hardin, was an infant, Hale was involved in a romantic liaison with *New Yorker* writer and editor Wolcott Gibbs.<sup>60</sup> The sudden death of Philip Hale in February of 1931, which was tremendously upsetting to Nancy Hale and to her mother, may have ignited her romance with Gibbs. She received a telegram from him at her father's passing, but it is unclear when the relationship began. A few weeks later, in a letter dated 9 March 1931, Gibbs asked Hale to share his bed, and he wrote of changing her name, apparently through marriage to him. He commented about a place he was visiting, "There is a baby here, but not nearly as nice as Mark," who was then a year old. On 10 March 1931, he wrote to Hale, "I love you because you're smarter and better looking than anyone I know" (SSC, NHP, 13.8). Gibbs demonstrated the era's rejection of traditional values, a rejection which disrupted lives and destroyed families. Nancy Hale adopted the new open approach to marriage along with its acceptable exit via divorce, an option which grew in popularity during the modern era.

The appeal of her wooing suitor was just one factor in Nancy Hale's increasing dissatisfaction with her marriage. Despite her modern desire to make her own way, at times Hale voiced the traditional idea that a male should support his family. She was open with Lilian Hale about her dissatisfaction with her husband's financial contribution to the marriage. She wrote to her mother about an invitation to stay with a Count and Countess in Paris, which she felt compelled to regret: "I thought on the whole that although this is the most tempting invitation I have ever had I had better not do it. I just feel that if I went everything would go to rack and ruin because Taylor doesn't make enough money to keep things going. It is a pity that I keep getting

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<sup>60</sup> The love letters that Wolcott Gibbs wrote Nancy Hale are found in SSC, NHP, 13.8, 1930-1933.

these appetizing invitations and never can accept them” (SSC, NHP, 6.10, 1 Apr. 1931). Hale resented the responsibility of the role of breadwinner even though she was driven in her pursuit of a career. During the first two years of marriage, the young couple enjoyed steady employment as they both moved ahead in their work. Their salaries were supplemented by a monthly check from Hardin’s well-to-do parents. Before the birth of her son, Nancy Hale was offered a position as assistant to the head of *Harper’s Bazaar* at a salary of \$150 a week. When they learned she was pregnant, the magazine representatives suggested that she wait to begin work until after the baby was born (SSC, NHP, 6.8. Letter from NH to LWH, Fall 1929). Hale often wrote of money to her mother, calculating how much she and her husband were making a year. In January of 1930, two months before Mark’s birth, she wrote to Lilian Westcott Hale that Taylor Hardin’s weekly salary had been raised to \$100, and including the money that the Hardins gave them, they were making \$10,200 annually.

The good fortune did not last, and Hale proved unwilling to weather the hardship. *Harper’s Bazaar* did not hire her after all, and the couple’s position had changed considerably by the time of her 23 April 1931 letter to Lilian Hale, when Mark was thirteen months old. She wrote that “...the inevitable has happened to Taylor. He was fired from his job yesterday. Why it didn’t happen long ago is what I don’t see. He has been very arrogant and supercilious to the editor, since he has been there, because he is a Jew, not realizing that in business there are no racial or social distinctions” (SSC, NHP, 6.10). Hale showed her connection to both the modern world and to past standards when she wrote, “I believe there is a funny old tradition that husbands are supposed to earn at least fifty-percent of the family support” (SSC, NHP, 6.10, NH to LWH, 23 April 1931). She turned her full anger on her husband calling him, “...the most immature and childish person,” before closing on a practical note: “I have worked steadily and

made a fairly good thing of what I've done. But to hell with that. What can you do with a person who is mentally about 6 years old?" (SSC, NHP, 6.10. NH to LWH, Apr. 1931). Hale's own relationship demonstrated the effects of the disintegration of family values due to the modern challenge to Victorian structures. Gibbs wrote of his concern about her situation, including her husband and son. He wonders "...what possible way there is out of the whole damn business." His position is clear even as he stresses that the decision is Hale's. He writes to Hale that she could wait until the situation is "so complicated you'll have to do something, but by that time such a lot might happen. You might change your mind, Mark might be old enough to realize what it was all about, anything. It's a mess. The only simple thing about it, that won't change or get mixed up, is the way I love you" (SSC, NHP, 13.8. 10 June 1932).

Taylor Hardin's correspondence indicated his awareness of his wife's behavior. He wrote in a letter of 4 May 1931, to Lilian Westcott Hale, that Nancy Hale had decided to divorce him, a fact of which both sets of the young couple's parents have been made aware (SSC, NHP, 100.33). Another letter followed the next day with a correction: "Nancy has decided not to rush into a divorce. The whole trouble, as you doubtless know, has been brought on by Nancy's becoming attached to another man. The thing has been going on for weeks right under my nose, and I have been the last person in New York to know anything about its seriousness" (SSC, NHP, 100.33). Hardin appears as concerned with his wife's choice of men as with the fact of the affair, writing that Gibbs<sup>61</sup> was "fired out of Hill," the boarding school which Hardin also attended, and that he could not get into college. He continues, "He is jittery and shy and ill at ease, and he cannot look me in the eye" (SSC, NHP, 100.33). Here Taylor Hardin maintains a

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<sup>61</sup> Taylor Hardin does not mention Gibbs by name, but his detailed description, including the name of a book written by Gibbs, leaves no room for doubt (SSC, NHP, 100.33).

traditional stance, saying that Gibbs “ hates to put on evening clothes and makes fun of all the trifling little forms and manners which people of quality have somehow got accustomed to” (SSC, NHP, 100.33).

The couple never recovered from the affair, and on 7 November 1934, Nancy Hale wrote to Lilian Westcott Hale, “I got a wire from Taylor in England about the documents I sent him, saying he was signing them at once, and suggesting that I establish a Nevada residence as soon as possible. Which means that he agreed to the terms of the separation agreement” (SSC, NHP, 6.11). Hale opted for the modern method of ending a marriage quickly, by spending six weeks in Reno, Nevada, an experience which she described in her writing.<sup>62</sup> Taylor Hardin maintained a polite and steady correspondence with Lilian Westcott Hale even during the breakup of his marriage to her daughter. He wrote on 6 March 1935, from Middleburg, Virginia, where he was living: “I wonder if you could do me a favor: tell me, if you know, whether I am divorced legally or not? I have had no word from Nancy.” He had heard that Hale was out of the country, and he described his view of the events: “The whole business has been sort of hazy for me—as you may know. Loads of people seem to know more about it all than I do. I haven’t had much direct information since a letter I got from Nancy while I was in England saying she was going to get a divorce. And I hate all the gossip I hear. Is there any way to reach Nancy by mail?” (SSC, NHP, 101.1). Nancy Hale controlled the situation completely.

The difference in the Modern woman and her Victorian predecessor was demonstrated in Nancy Hale’s independent decision-making as opposed to her mother’s desire to meet society’s expectations. In a letter of 6 March 1935, Taylor Hardin wrote to Lilian Westcott Hale, “I have

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<sup>62</sup> Nancy Hale later writes about Reno divorces in *The Sign of Jonah*.

no words to tell you how beautifully I think you've behaved throughout the whole unfortunate course of events [...] Nancy played her inevitable role, and I mine [...] The real sufferer, I suppose, is to be Mark. I say that because I look back on my childhood as a childhood of happy homes—grandmother's and father's. And a happy home is bound to instill something rather sweet into the growing heart..." (SSC, HFP, 101.1). Lilian Westcott Hale, in the conciliatory fashion of the Victorian woman, avoided any remonstrance of her daughter's behavior in her steady flow of correspondence. Leuchtenburg says of the era's increase in female promiscuity both before and during marriage: "The degree of sexual experimentation in the 1920's has certainly been exaggerated, but there is a good deal to bear out Alexander Pope's aphorism that 'every woman is at heart a rake'" (171). The sociological research of the 1920s conveyed, according to Stanley Coben, "An aura of despair" ("Assault" 608). The first school of sociology at University of Chicago focused on the problem of rapid change weakening social structures. Coben reports that the results were measured in "crime, divorce, mental illness, social deviancy, and race and ethnic conflict" ("Assault" 608). Nancy Hale addressed these problems of the time period in her stories, tackling premarital relations, abortion, extramarital affairs, racism, alcoholism, and divorce. The Modern age allowed sexual liaisons and necessarily provided a solution to their destructive effect on marriage. The wider use of and tolerance for divorce was a side effect of the lapsed sexual code of conduct.

Nancy Hale was representative of the period's tendency to regard marriage as a less permanent situation than the Victorians had. Leuchtenburg's research indicates the increase in divorce rates, with 1914 marking the first year in the United States that divorces exceeded 100,000 in number, a figure which more than doubled by 1929. Leuchtenburg asserts that the freedoms that women were seizing led to family instability. He concludes that "The increase in

divorce probably meant less an increase in marital unhappiness than a refusal to go on with marriages which would earlier have been tolerated” (162). Wolcott Gibbs’s letters to Hale illustrate Leuchtenburg’s conclusion that the new moderns became unwilling to remain in unions which did not make them happy (161-162). Frustrated by his inability to share his life with the married Hale, Gibbs discouraged her early attempt to save her marriage to Hardin: “I think it’s dreadful to look forward to a mutual tolerance, to simply being able to put up with each other, as all you can expect from marriage [...] if you’re lucky you meet someone who understands everything you do far too well to fuss about it, [...] it’s criminal to let anything like that get away from you. Altogether I think it would be very wise for you to marry me” (SSC, NHP, 13.8).

Nancy Hale’s correspondence and her autobiographical fiction both indicate the enormous change in the family structure, since her mother had considered so carefully her own decision to risk a compromise of her art by marrying. Lilian Westcott’s choice to marry an artist and critic bears a superficial resemblance to her daughter’s marriages to writers, but a key difference contributed to Nancy Hale’s marital discomfort: the artistic rivalry which played a significant role in her first two marriages. It already has been noted that Philip Hale recognized his wife’s paintings as superior to his own, yet accepted the fact graciously. Of course, Philip Hale was an established critic, instructor, and artist when he met Lilian Westcott, whereas Taylor Hardin, an aspiring writer, worked on various New York publications as his wife did during their marriage. They were both struggling for recognition. Hardin commented to Lilian Hale about her daughter’s great success, but perhaps more telling of his underlying feelings were his copies of Nancy Hale’s books, containing lists in Hardin’s hand, of the errors he considered she made in



each.<sup>63</sup> Despite an undergraduate degree from Yale and a Ph.D. from the University of Virginia, Hardin failed to attain his wife's level of success as a writer. He gave up on his ambitions after their divorce and moved to Virginia where he became a recognized horse breeder.

When they divorced, the couple divided custody of their son. Mark Hardin lived with Lilian Hale for much of Nancy Hale's annual custody period of six months. Nancy Hale remained in New York, working during the day and socializing nearly every evening, before returning home to write. She held editing jobs at *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair*. Hale's description of her position at *Vogue* reflects the frivolity of the times. She says, "It wasn't especially literary. I loathed it because it was so phony. Your status was shown by the way you wore your hat. The highest value in the world with those people seemed to be chic dress" (Omwake). Hale boasted Clare Booth Luce as her hireling, but she left the job because, "'The rest of the staff at *Vogue*,' she laments, 'thought I was coming in later in the morning and making more money than they. They were right I moved on to avoid more dissension'" (Coffey 25). In 1935 Hale was hired by the *New York Times* as its first woman reporter<sup>64</sup> (Freeman, "Nancy Hale" 213). She said of her position, "I'd never worked as a reporter, but there I was, one woman in the city room with 100 men. They were most helpful, but I was scared just the same. Then I went out and bought a raincoat and felt that I was a reporter" (Friddell). Hale appeared to adopt her concern for stylish dress from the staff at *Vogue*. Freeman says that Hale's hiring by the *New York Times* was among her proudest accomplishments (Interview), and while it proved her as a New Woman, it

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<sup>63</sup> The author has examined several such examples in his distinctive hand. They are now owned by Hardin's granddaughters.

<sup>64</sup> Hale believed this claim to be the case, but Thomas Tanselle states that she is the fourth woman hired for such a position in fifty years (32).

also caused her to send her child to live with her mother in Dedham.<sup>65</sup> Naomi Jolles wrote that Hale loved being the only woman among so many men, but she stayed only six months at the position which, along with her social life, exhausted her. A piece in the *New York Evening Journal* called Nancy Hale a “natural born party girl.” Its author wrote, “I remember a famous party in Florence last winter where everybody thought that Nancy was Greta Garbo. Even when they discovered that she wasn’t la Garbo, she was still the sensation of the evening” (SSC, NHP, 1.8. “Room”).

Nancy Hale lived the life of the New Woman and she wrote about it in her fiction. A news account of 1937 addresses Nancy Hale’s transformation from Boston debutante to modern New Woman. The write up covers Hale’s return to Boston for a speaking engagement, refreshing the memories of any who had forgotten her:

When Nancy Hale left Boston after her wedding to Taylor Scott Hardin some eight or nine years ago, the memory she left behind with a great many was that of a girl who dared to be different by wearing a wedding veil that wasn’t the traditional white. [...] Since then she has been the first girl to smoke in an Easter parade in New York, and the first in a great many things...writing for this or that publication, reporting for the New York Times, and doing all the things a great many of her fellow Junior Leaguers in Boston dream about doing. (Winslow)

Stansell wrote that fears of social problems in early twentieth century New York, which included the New Woman, had disrupted society to the extent that “A new kind of man seemed necessary, a tough, vigorous, decisive figure to match modern women’s capabilities, recuperate

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<sup>65</sup> SSC, NHP, 6.12. Letters from NH to LWH indicate that Mark Hardin is living in Dedham for prolonged periods.

the certainties of masculine direction, and subdue the threat of anarchic sexual modernism” (31-32). It was with exactly that assertive male, a Hemingway-styled man, that Nancy Hale replaced her first husband. Her striking looks and style produced a constant flow of men, leading to a desperate infatuation with writer and news reporter Charles Christian Wertenbaker, who like Hardin came from an aristocratic Southern background. Hale entered a troubled marriage with Wertenbaker in October of 1935 (figure 84), settling in the country outside of Charlottesville, Virginia, where she remained for the rest of her life. The same jealousy problems that had plagued her first marriage continued with the second, compounded by Wertenbaker’s forceful, dominating personality. A 1936 article focusing on Hale mentions that “Charles Wertenbaker, Nancy Hale’s husband, was at the party, and submitted with equanimity to being introduced as Nancy Hale’s husband. . . . He is on the staff of ‘Fortune,’ like everybody else. . . . Some day we are going to investigate that publication; they must have the Roman catacombs to keep the staff in” (“Turns with a Bookworm”). Nancy Hale’s successful career was more problematical with Wertenbaker than it had been with Hardin. Beebe related that Wertenbaker said Hale’s writing hurt their relationship because she was more successful than he, and he warned that if she continued to upstage him, it would ruin the marriage (Interview). Beebe recalled, “She was a true figure on the literary scene. He [Wertenbaker] forbade Nancy from writing any fiction” (Interview). Denying her the success for which she had worked so hard was, in Hale’s view, like cutting off one of her limbs.

She had attained a position of respect in the literary world by that time. Joan Crane, a University of Virginia librarian writing about Nancy Hale, listed significant women writers of the thirties: “Willa Cather, Edith Wharton and Ellen Glasgow still dominated the literary theatre of operations.” She continued by noting the group of more vigorous writers who followed:

“Katherine Anne Porter, Djuna Barnes, Kay Boyle, Mary McCarthy, Jean Stafford, Eudora Welty, Caroline Gordon, Shirley Jackson, Jessamyn West, Carson McCullers and, very substantially, Nancy Hale.” Crane acknowledged the dominant position held by Hale’s publisher, Scribner’s, largely as a result of the tremendous vision of Maxwell Perkins: “The Scribner ranks were formidable, displaying the combined powers of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, Thomas Wolfe, VanWyck Brooks, James Boyd, James Hunecker, Ring Lardner. The female roster included Caroline Gordon, Marcia Davenport, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings and, again very substantially, the young Nancy Hale.” One more list provides an assessment of the tier Hale’s work occupied: the books dedicated to Max Perkins, including “*The Beautiful and Damned*, *Of Time and the River*, *The Old Man and the Sea* and Nancy Hale’s second volume of short stories, *Between the Dark and the Daylight*.” Crane identified Hale as “the most promising young woman writer in the Scribner’s stable.” Perkins waited patiently for his protégée to bloom, as he had predicted she would on meeting her. He waited also for the financial returns of her writing to enrich Scribner’s, the publishing house that supported her early efforts. Years passed and much conflict entered Hale’s personal life before she finished her tremendous best seller of 1942, which described, perhaps as no one had before, the unique difficulty of being a woman in the modern era.

This was the book for which Maxwell Perkins had been waiting. The legendary editor, whose famous wade through cartons of manuscript produced by Thomas Wolfe resulted in *Of Time and the River*, had also suggested novels like Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings’s *The Yearling*, a Pulitzer Prize winner. He coddled Hale her difficulties in writing *The Prodigal Women*, the story

of her failed relationship with Charles Wertenbaker.<sup>66</sup> Berg says that “Perkins admired it for revealing female character so deftly” (413). Perkins wrote to Hale, “I believed in you and said so, and while I don’t believe that sales are in themselves a proof, they are the only proof and the irrefutable proof to a lot of people to whom I have to say things, booksellers and such. So don’t thank me for any pleasure. It is I who must thank you” (qtd. in Berg 413). Hale’s novel revealed the redefined standards of modern women who exhibited sexual freedom, battled men emotionally, rejected the confinement of domesticity, and willfully terminated pregnancy. The male characters, in reaction, assert their dominance, controlling and threatening the female characters, both emotionally and physically. Hale’s nervous breakdown, after the birth of her second son with Charles Wertenbaker in 1938, slowed the progress of the often violent novel. The lengthy work emerged at last, years after the couple’s divorce when Hale had married for a third time. Freeman says it “dramatized, with unflinching candor, the psychological cost of being a woman at that time” (Freeman, “Nancy Hale” 214).

The novel was difficult for Hale because of the subject matter, but she was also troubled by its large scale, as she wrote to William Maxwell, whom she referred to as “a kind of artistic conscience” (SSC, NHP, 14.20, letter to WM in 1943): “The whole scale is so big and you have to keep your mind on the big side, the whole picture, and somehow you can’t also write in careful detail; I mean you can’t write the kind of accurate small-and-sound [sic] stuff that I know I can sometimes do well, but must write on a larger, looser scale of which I am unsure since I

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<sup>66</sup> Although there is no doubt about the source of material for the novel, Nancy Hale herself described it as the story of her marriage to Wertenbaker. When she wrote to Lilian Hale that she wanted to dedicate the cathartic work to her mother and asked if her mother was amenable, Lilian Hale declined the offer (SSC, NHP, 7.3, letters of 13 March 1942 and 19 April 1942, both from NH to LWH).

have no experience with it. I hope to God it turns out right. I know the book is about something important (to me) and that the parts are right to tell the bigger story..." (SSC, NHP, letter to WM, n.d., 14.20). Despite what she felt to be a lack of sensory detail, committing the memories of her marriage to paper required a painful revisiting of emotions which Hale had struggled to heal. Beebe says, "She was ahead of her time in personal memoir—not fiction. Confessional literature emerged in the 60s; Nancy Hale was flirting with that form years before—flirting with the intersection between fiction and memoir. She writes nonfiction short stories ahead of Capote. She is doing more than describe the outer event—she includes what is happening in the mind as well" (Interview). Hale wrote in a speech that while autobiographical writing is rooted in reality, it is created with awareness that the perceptions will be shared. The author's purpose is to bring the reader to a sense of identification with the writing, to make the reader a part of it (SSC, NHP, 26.2, card 26). The life of the author contributes to the process, but the reaction of the audience, Hale felt, was the measure of a work's success. Hale wrote of the subject, "...your life is important, it is serious and tragic and pathetic and frustrated, right down the line. But if you are going to make it seem in the slightest degree important to that sea of blank faces, your possible public, it has got to be on their terms. They are viewing you coldly from outside" (SSC, NHP, 26.2, card 16). Hale expands on the subject:

...people do like to get together and have a good talk about their youths. Nobody listens to anybody else, except to be reminded of something that happened to them when they were ten. I have come to believe that this is a basic impulse. For the writer of autobiography it means something important: that here is something in readers which can be reached, an instinct to share memories, a desire to compare notes on living. (SSC, NHP, 26.2, card 28)

The author's purpose, even in autobiographical writing, according to Hale, is to evoke memories which provide the members of the audience a sense of belonging in the world, "offering a seat to them in that same boat we are all in" (SSC, NHP, 26.2, card 29). Her view equates with the Boston painters' goal to "make it like." In creating images that resemble the actual objects of the artworks, they are unifying forms as Hale is unifying her stories with the stories of her audience. The experience of life is based on glimmers of shared recollections rather than on actual experience of the same events. Hale equates the sense of community inspired with "...sitting on some cosmic front porch together, rocking, exchanging long, gratifying accounts of our happy or unhappy lives. At any moment the writer is trying to make it seem that the reader can break in upon the writer's stream of discourse crying, 'Why that is just the way it was with me!'" (SSC, NHP, 26.2, card 31).

*The Prodigal Women*, published in 1942 and rich in detail of the 1920s and the 1930s which it describes, was understandable to women, although it focused not on a universal experience, but once again on that segment which Hale understood, "the trials and follies of well-bred women" (Coffey 25). She was not alone in electing to write from within her social niche. Stansell notes that "Henry James spoke of the era's literary scene as 'subdivided as a chess board, with each little square confessing only to its own *kind* of accessibility'" (124). As each writer explored what he or she knew best, the audience received varied works based on ethnic or social group, gender, and as many other factors as distinguish an individual. William Maxwell described Hale's perspective in his "Tribute" to her, "Part of the richness of her fiction comes from her social knowledge—from the fact that she is at home in, though not actually committed to, the world of good manners" (227). Hale's work, always revealing of her life,

endured its greatest challenge with *The Prodigal Women*, which described in detail a relationship filled with anger, pain, fear, and violence.

It is the story of three young women forging their way, making choices, some fortunate and others less fortunate. The heroine, Leda March, observes the ways of the modern world and the details that make a happy marriage, which she describes as “a nickname for your husband, plenty of money, a good forehand stroke at tennis, your charming mother-in-law dropping in for a cocktail not too often, little dinner parties with terribly good food and highballs afterwards from expensive crystal glasses” (213). Leda is willful and analytical, a cold observer out to grab what she can from life. She grows up as the only child in a proper, Boston household, a blooming rose who sneers at her parents’ tedious acceptance of their narrow world. She becomes hard and calculating, determined to win at life. The other two women characters are sisters, and each of the three reacts to the world differently.

The Jekyll sisters move to Boston from a small town in Virginia, and Leda becomes the best childhood friend of the younger girl, Betsy. Leda is smitten by the lively family, so different from staid New Englanders. The two young friends idolize Betsy’s older sister, Maizie Jekyll. After Maizie marries a dark and forceful Boston artist, the girls’ paths divide, but they crash into each other’s worlds again years later. Maizie has been tragically broken by the artist Lambert Rudd, who married her because she became pregnant. Trying to win back his favor, she undergoes an abortion while they are travelling in South America. The procedure which nearly kills her is an autobiographical account of Hale’s own botched abortion<sup>67</sup> while married to Wertenbaker. Maizie enters a long-term residential therapy facility in Virginia, while Rudd stays

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<sup>67</sup> Freeman recalls in an interview that an Embassy representative in South America took care of Hale during her recovery.



on the plantation that Leda, who is now his lover, rents nearby. Maizie's breakdown also is based on Hale's personal experience. The account closely corresponds to the marriage of Hale and Wertenbaker. In court documents, Charles Wertenbaker told a judge that Hale manipulated him into marriage, and Rudd says to his wife and Leda, "I never wanted to marry anybody. Not either of you. You know that God damned well." He claims they intend to destroy him: "It does something to you, doesn't it, to see a man being himself, being a man? You can't stand it. Oh no, you've got to get yourself married, and safe, so you can begin breaking him down. You know God damned well how you got me to marry you. You know how you kept me married..." (465). He then turns his vengeance on his strong-willed lover, accusing Leda of manipulation: "You had to have marriage promised to you before you'd give up one drop of your precious self. You knew you were putting me through hell. That was what you were after. It's a God damned sneaky fight, no holds barred, so the women can win. The men get destroyed" (465). In his rage he accuses the male doctor who is also present of siding with the women. The novel challenges the concept of marriage, and it contains none of the traditional comfort attached to the Victorian idea of family.

Hale's words reflect her recognition of the modern plight of both sexes, and after the confrontation, the narrator concedes that "It was Lambert who had been in the right; both of them [Leda and Maizie] who had been in the wrong. He stood for something. They clung to their safety" (470). The three female characters, whose stories are told in *The Prodigal Women*, all represent aspects of Hale herself. She acknowledges that "Oneself is not to be sneezed at as a source of ideas for characters [...] I am made up, as all human beings are, of dozens of fragments glued together into a person by the Grace of God: Any one of which is capable of

producing a fully integrated character in fiction” (SSC, NHP, 26.2, card A). She supplies an anecdote in her discussion of autobiographical writing:

A friend of mine once wrote a novel which she told me was peopled by the three primary aspects of herself. Yet the critics said of that novel that it presented interestingly contrasted types of modern woman, in striking conflict with each other’s philosophies. At the same time that my friend told me she had based all these contrasting characters on aspects of herself, she added, sometimes I feel as if I had lived three lifetimes. I think we all sometimes feel that way—one’s childhood is so remote, one’s youth so inconceivably rash today, ones mistakes so irremediable. (SSC, NHP, 26.2, card B)

Hale might have been writing about the three prodigal women, all of whom reveal aspects of her own life. Leda March lives Hale’s Boston childhood, Betsy Jekyll experiences her infatuation with New York’s freedoms, and poor, broken Maizie suffers the nervous breakdown that Hale experienced shortly after the birth of her second son, as well as the South American abortion which nearly killed both Hale and the fictional character. At the end of the novel, Leda calmly discusses with her former husband, future arrangements for their son. Unlike Hale, who fought for possession of her children to keep them away from their fathers,<sup>68</sup> Leda gives up her son for his own good. Finally, she recognizes that her conflicts arise from her associations with the world: “Yes, I really love my child. When I am alone. But even with him, I am fighting for something. I am fighting to make him mine” (552). Hale struggled for the same control, sharing

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<sup>68</sup> This is an important distinction. Extensive letters in the Sophia Smith Collection indicate that during the periods of Nancy Hale’s custody of her children, they often were cared for by Lilian Westcott Hale in Dedham. While Nancy Hale tried to keep her sons from their fathers, especially in the case of Wertenbaker, she did not consistently care for them in her own home.

custody of Mark Hardin with her first husband, six months of custody to each during the year, the same arrangement Leda March had arranged when she first divorced.

Hale struggled with her first two husbands for power, which was apparent in her efforts to keep her children from their fathers. While the disturbing events with Wertenbaker were not clearly explained, correspondence indicates his initial acceptance of responsibility for the couple's difficulties. Nancy Hale was hospitalized for an extended period following the February 1938 birth of her second son. Wertenbaker wrote to Lilian Hale on 17 October 1938, "This trouble is my doing and the only thing I can do now is to leave Nancy to make her decisions without trying to influence her" (SSC, HFP, 102.8). On 28 November 1938 he wrote again to Lilian Hale:

I wish I had talked to you more freely about the mistakes I have made with Nancy. But I was ashamed of my part in them and I felt that it would have been disloyal to put any of the blame on Nancy. For more than a year I worked to make up for those previous mistakes, and your confidence in me more than anything else made me feel that I was succeeding. I still believe that I accomplished a great deal in that year toward becoming a better person. I don't want to be let off any of the blame I deserve, but I hope you will believe, as I honestly do, that what happened to me was a breakdown. I think that while my character was improving in many respects, it had one bad flaw that I didn't work to correct, as well as other lesser ones, and that as a result of the fear and tension and uncertainty of that whole year I began to crack up and finally broke down in the weakest spot. I only wish I could have broken down physically or mentally instead of morally. (SSC, HFP, 102.8)

The journal notes that Nancy Hale kept during her breakdown indicate her tremendous emotional torment. On pages headed KEEP she speaks first of an inferiority complex, about which she writes:

I cured by showing myself I could do things well—writing—then I was so brash and sure of myself that I hurt Taylor terribly and then my lying habit (to protect myself) hurt Charles and made him hurt me. I just don't want to be hurt any more by people and then I can be safe and be good to them which is what I want. I've been selfish all my life, first to protect myself, later to have a good time, & everyone has been good to me except Charles and he was sick and I had hurt him Remember this. (SSC, NHP, 19.12)

Hale's problems stemmed largely from her difficulty in relationships with men. She commented in an interview after the publication of *The Prodigal Women*: "What is all this masculinity that so many men who write have become so self-conscious about? Why must they cherish their masculinity so much? What makes it so delicate? If a woman writes a good story or makes a radio talk, why should her husband claim that she is destroying his masculinity?"(Gelder 2). She described the difficulties in her relationship with Wertenbaker, who was threatened by Hale's success. The problems with Wertenbaker may have begun before the marriage, according to the affidavit brought before a judge in Wertenbaker's battle to increase the custody time with his son. The document claimed that Hale coerced him into marriage with the promise of an heir, and he cited her outside relationships during her marriage to Hardin. Wertenbaker continued that he and Hale both were married when they first

connected, a fact which he twisted against Hale, ignoring his own culpability.<sup>69</sup> In an interview, Nancy Hale voiced her feelings about the marriage when she said of *The Prodigal Women*, ““There’s quite a bit of autobiography .... the real theme of the book is cruelty and fear...”” (Gelder 2). The novel contains accounts of physically and emotionally painful interrogation sessions, when Hector attempts to control the loyal Betsy by forcing her to recall the details of her relationships with past lovers, incidents based in Hale’s relationship with Wertenbaker. She struggled to write about her marriage in the novel: “In the midst of her pain realization took shape in Betsy’s mind: Hector had a deep tenderness and compassion for men; for women, for her, he had hatred and suspicion” (403).

Hale’s was a modern reality, far removed from her mother’s Victorian world. Feminist Rita Felski says, “... our experiential reality at the most primal and instinctual level is always already soaked in culture. Our sense of what it means to be a woman, of how women look, talk, think, and feel, comes from the books we read, the films we watch, and the invisible ether of everyday assumptions and cultural beliefs in which we are suspended. Rather than subjects producing texts, in other words, texts produce subjects” (18). Hale wrote of the conflicts of the modern age along with the positive exhilaration women experienced through living in New York. Hale’s description of Betsy, before the changes wrought by Hector, expresses the dynamic quality of the New Woman: “She walked with long, vigorous steps on her high heels across the freshly watered streets, in her new, smart little tweed dresses and her little hats. She knew she looked like a boy and she was glad; she felt like a boy. To be a young girl in New York in those days was to be like a young boy: as free, as unshackled, as adventurous” (280).

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<sup>69</sup> The legal arguments between Hale and Wertenbaker are archived in the Charlottesville, Virginia Courthouse, Closed Matters drawer 5.

Hale continues the male comparison through the description of Betsy's refreshingly modern relationship with another young woman: "By that time they were on good, easy, free-speaking terms, like two young men. Neither trespassed on the other's privacy" (283). Describing her relationships with men to her friend, Betsy refers to the power battle being waged as women struggle for footing: "I don't like the feeling that they think they've conquered you. That you've surrendered to them" (287). The friend, Liz, responds: "The only possible way I can imagine marriage being any fun would be if you ran things your own way" (287). She summarizes the New Woman in another passage:

"We've stopped being women, in the old sense of women. Girls like you and me. We can't make the regular calculations. It's more as if we were men. We work, and we have a big time, and if we don't like what goes on we can do something else. I guess it spoils us. I know I wouldn't like being married to just one man and having to make all the compromises and adjustments and bothering with all that, no matter how much I was in love. I mean, love is divine, but why marriage? Well money, yes. But what a lot to give up to get money. Maybe I'll be making a lot of money some day. Or maybe somebody will be foolish enough to give me some. But to give up my independence and the ability to do just what I please, and being accountable to nobody---for any love-nest I don't care how cosy [sic] and warm—I think it's crazy." (286)

Despite the attraction of the new free lifestyle, the women in Hale's book live in an imperfect world. The title of *The Prodigal Women* indicates the negative social judgment of their behavior. The term *prodigal* denotes the waste and extravagance associated with the period. Freeman feels that Hale's most noteworthy literary characterizations are "...her

penetrating portraits of women, who may seem calm, and even satisfied, but beneath the surface are struggling to retain their self-esteem and individuality..."("Nancy Hale," 218). Again, Hale narrows her focus to include only her own elevated milieu. Freeman writes, "Nancy Hale was trained from childhood by her painter parents to 'look hard' and directly at specific objects, individuals, and scenes. As a result, she has become an extraordinarily keen observer of the minute differences in gesture, manners, speech patterns, and attitudes" (218) of her characters. Hale captured the struggles of privileged women coping with the new freedoms of the 1930s in New York City.

Those new freedoms were tied to the feminist goals in place during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The socio-historical concept of feminism evolved with contemporary thought, always married to the goal of advancing women's rights. Nancy Hale exercised the gains that women had accomplished in their careers, but she did not call herself a feminist, choosing instead to stress her individuality and the importance of her work; she did, nonetheless, embrace the most important ideals of the era's New Woman: independence, both social and economic, and sexual freedom (Swinth 169). She relished the changing role of women in America. Hale said that she identified with feminism more than she did not, but she generally eschewed such identifications. In an interview, she explained:

I think I am before anything a person—independent of sex, occupation, race, nationality [...] It makes me think of the way one used to write in the front of school books: Nancy Hale, Winsor School, Boston, Mass., United States, North America, World, Universe—and other variations. But at the top of the pyramid, and, essential to it all, is personhood—and that is the one essential, and, in itself, independent of sex. (Hornblower)

Hale denied identification as a feminist, although she possessed qualities that defined the women active in the movement. Swinth examines this intersection: “The most radical of the New Women embraced sexual liberation and female economic independence—the two beliefs that most shaped the new movement called feminism. In the name of all women, feminism validated the full development of female selfhood and, significantly, the pursuit of individual aims” (169). What Hale described as an individual approach to the world was actually an evolving freedom that was acknowledged by a large number of the period’s women. Nancy Hale was one representative of the new ideas replacing Victorian standards, but she exercised her own needs and desires rather than the goals of a group. In this way she combined the new demands for equality for women with the period youth’s tendency to egocentrism. Nancy Hale functions not as a social advocate for advances for women, but as a product of the advances resulting from the efforts of such social activists. Guy Friddell reports from an interview, “Miss Hale has never been subjected to discrimination as a woman writer, but she believes that the women’s liberation movement ‘is a spontaneous expression that had to come up. Much of it is carried to such extremes that it defeats itself; but then you can’t hoist something out of a morass unless you go to extremes’” (“Spontaneous”). Hale concerned herself with career professionalism, and she never appeared to suffer inordinate difficulties in finding positions in the work force or in finding agents or publishers for her work. The significant interruptions to her writing were the emotional problems resulting from her relationships with men. Despite the inner strength of her female characters, Hale appeared incapable of living independently. After Wertenbaker, she received emotional support through her romantic relationship with a Boston lawyer who advised<sup>70</sup> her

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<sup>70</sup> A bundle of the attorney’s letters to Hale was found in Hale’s home after her death. Author’s files.



about how to retain custody of her youngest son, William Wertenbaker. The attorney wrote on 8 July 1940 in regard to Wertenbaker's efforts to spend more time with his son than the custody terms allowed:

I enclose a letter from Dr. Baker which if presented to the Charlottesville court by Mr. Boyd with the argument that Wertenbaker has never contributed to the support of Lillie [sic, should read Willie in reference to William Wertenbaker] in the year and eight or so months since the original decreee [sic] and has never in that same long period of time availed himself once of the opportunity to see his son which you had with no court compulsion extended to him, and that for that reason it would be grossly unfair to cause you to drop the work you are doing in support of the same child and make a twelve hundred mile round trip to the peril of your health at a time set by Wertenbaker...

The attorney interspersed declarations of his love for Hale with his consistent advice regarding the matter that most concerned her—keeping Wertenbaker away from his son. He offered further counsel to Hale on the following day: "...you have absolutely nothing to lose by postponing this hearing three months, and God knows it is only fair that you set the time for it to suit your convenience. [...] Wertenbaker might lose interest in the next three months – his interest has not been of uniform intensity in the last couple of years. The hearing might be somewhat unpleasant and embarrassing..."

On 11 July 1940 he wrote to Hale, "... I do reluctantly conclude that there is no way of escaping a judge's individual, personal impressions in your action – but even so, there should be every chance that the judge should find your way, almost no matter how the case is presented, and also there is every likelihood that nothing will be allowed to be introduced into evidence

which is distasteful to you.” Despite the letters’ indication of a lack of paternal interest, Wertenbaker cared for his son during Nancy Hale’s extended hospital stay when her child was an infant. She may have feared repercussions about her fitness to care for her son if Wertenbaker used the information about her breakdown against her. In August 1940 the attorney addressed his feelings for Hale: “I have from the beginning thought you most horribly sensitive & vulnerable, my dearest, & have wanted so much to be a shell about you.” Despite her apparent frailty, he repeatedly expressed his love for Nancy Hale in letters which continued through September. Shortly after that, Hale met, dated, and deliberated about whether to marry Fredson Bowers, a professor at the University of Virginia (figure 85) who also played the protector’s role with Hale. Her old friend Frances McFadden wrote to Lilian Westcott Hale of meeting Bowers: “...the minute I saw him I breathed a big sigh of relief, for I liked him at once. He was so sweet and gentle with Nancy and really thoughtful with her and he has the nice straight eye of a faithful dog on guard” (SSC, HFP, 102.3, 30 July 1943). Nancy Hale compared Bowers to her father in a letter to Lilian Westcott Hale in March of 1941:

He has such a nice mind, it’s the nearest thing to having Papa talk about poetry etc. I’ve known for so long. I think he would like to marry me. I’m not considering it, I may quickly add, but I wonder what it would be like to be married to a college professor. Considerably nicer than a bastard like CW I should think. Bowers is such a calm, gentle man & hates crises. He’s not very beautiful or romantic looking but what comes out of his head is beautiful. (SSC, NHP, 7.2)

In her letters she continued to debate the idea of marrying Bowers, although in one to Lilian Westcott Hale, dated 13 March 1942, she makes it clear that she has not entirely resolved

the relationship with Charles Wertenbaker. She writes that the nearly completed *Prodigal Women* is "...all about Wertenbaker—what it really is is getting every single bit of the whole business out of my system. I really feel that when I finish it I will have sort of cleansed him entirely out of my blood" (SSC, NHP, 7.3). Later in the same letter, she says, "...although my publisher thinks it's a really big book, [it] is definitely an unpleasant one."

Only two days later, she wrote of her intention to marry Bowers the next day, demonstrating through her words, her considerable weakness and vulnerability: "I couldn't have gone on living alone and running into mess after mess without eventually landing up in some trouble" (SSC, NHP, 7.3). Hale's letter indicates the New Woman's struggles with the surrounding world. She also demonstrates the deterioration of family, which results from the Modern era's rejection of prior standards and behavior codes. She wrote to Lilian Westcott Hale of her imminent marriage in terms of her twelve year old son who was in boarding school: "I hope Mark won't mind. I'm writing him as good a letter as I can, and perhaps it would be a good idea if you talked to him maybe over the telephone taking the tone that it is a grand thing, for Willy and for him and all of us—which indeed it is" (SSC, NHP, 7.3, 15 March 1942). There is no indication that her first child met his new stepfather prior to the marriage, the speed of which she explained to her mother after the fact. She wrote on 27 March 1942 that she was swayed to marry Bowers in a consultation with two male friends who convinced Hale:

...I was an idiot to even consider NOT marrying Fred, that among other things it would absolutely safeguard my position as regards CW and Willy since even beyond the security of marriage the position of professor here commands considerable respect and dignity. Anyway with two such men kicking me straight

into it, I decided my qualms were (as they said loudly), pretty phoney [sic] and did as I was told and jumped! (SSC, NHP, 7.3)

Nancy Hale's explanation of her decision to marry a third time at the age of thirty four, describes a haphazard gesture, conceding to the judgment of two males. Her belief in independence was apparently overwhelmed by her need for a secure image in order to maintain custody of her second son. Freeman recalls Lilian Westcott Hale's reaction to her daughter's third marriage in the simple statement, "Oh, Nancy, not again" (Interview). A Hale cousin commented in a typed correspondence to Lilian Hale on 6 April 1942: "I was indeed interested to hear that Nancy had again immersed herself in the waters of matrimony. Everybody says he is very nice and I hope she has a fine time." He adds the handwritten postscript: "Our best love to Nancy—What is her new name?" (SSC, HFP, 94.11, letter from Tom Hale). Hale's close friend and confidant William Maxwell was disappointed by the match, advising her in a letter of 10 September 1941: "Why don't you believe me when I tell you he's a stuffed shirt? [...] If you really think you ought, to stave off the terrors of a lonely old age, to marry a card index and a collection of phonograph records, go ahead and do it. But I wouldn't ever want to see you again if you did" (SSC, NHP, 14.21). He refers to Bowers's reputation as a literary scholar and his interest in music, which led to his prolific publication of critical reviews of newly recorded releases. Maxwell's hostility toward the match was upsetting to Hale (SSC, NHP, 14.20, undated letter from NH to WM), but she applied herself after the marriage to finishing the novel which had been such a struggle for her. By October of 1942 *The Prodigal Women* had sold more than 20,000 copies to rank third on the *Tribune* best seller list for the country. She wrote Lilian Westcott Hale on 18 October 1942 that her agent predicted the purchase of the movie rights, and she indicated her pleasure in Perkins's "I-told-you-so" reaction (SSC, NHP, 7.3). The best-seller

did prove controversial as Nancy Hale indicated to Lilian Hale, “Judy English wrote that maybe I’d be the greatest woman writer we’d ever had. All the intelligent people seem to like the book extremely, all the dopes and cranks write fantastic profane letters saying What Awful Characters” (SSC, NHP, 7.3, 9 Nov. 1942).

In the fall of 1942, Nancy Hale settled her family into a tiny house in Washington, D.C., where Bowers had received an appointment to decode messages during the war. On Christmas of 1942, she showed the strain encroaching on her happy world in a letter to Lilian Hale. She had forgotten her mother’s birthday. Her oldest son, twelve-year-old Mark, was home from boarding school, and Hale complained:

... I practically don’t see him. He leaves right after breakfast to go to his grandmother [Hardin]’s and gets home barely in time for dinner at night. It’s rather humiliating & I keep getting upset about it but Freddy calms me down. Especially as that old trouble-maker [Taylor Hardin’s mother] is obviously poisoning his mind all she can—he comes home with remarks like ‘Do you really like to be sick in bed all the time, Mother?’ I’d like to slap her face. Taylor was here the first couple of days, staying with his wife at his mother’s, and it was he who said that they would like to have Mark on Xmas Eve, to spend the night, and spend Xmas day then until afternoon when he could come back & have his presents here. (When he’s all tired & bored with Xmas). (SSC, NHP, 7.3)

For Hale, the holiday was one more power struggle, and she acknowledged that she should not give in on these points: “Of course what makes it impossible to make a fuss about it is that Mark wants to be with them most. He’s thoroughly indoctrinated with their general way of life” (SSC, NHP, 7.3). Hale appeared as motivated by her desire to prevent the paternal side of her

son's family from seeing him, as by her own desire to see her son. She repeatedly mentioned in correspondence how tiny her house was; her former mother-in-law Rosalie Hardin's residence was a five-story, fully-staffed mansion on Connecticut Avenue where Mark Hardin was treated with devoted attention. He spent summers with his father on his horse farm in Virginia, playing with local boys and riding his pony (figure 86).

Even as she struggled to maintain control of her sons' visitation schedules, the tasks of motherhood appeared too taxing for Hale in addition to her writing. Of her son by Wertenbaker, who was three at the time, Hale wrote in the same letter, "It is pretty hard managing him now there is no school to keep him busy—Especially to manage him from in bed. I get so irritated & impatient & yell at him which horrifies me with myself. Fred wondered if after the Xmas rush is over you could come down for a couple of weeks to be with Willy while I took a trip South. He thinks I need it, to get away" (SSC, NHP, 7.3, 25 Dec. 1942). Whether unable or unwilling to care for her children, Hale nonetheless attempted to prevent them spending time with their paternal relations. William Wertenbaker recalls Lilian Hale removing him from Washington to take him to Dedham with her. Following a hysterectomy, Nancy Hale wrote to her mother on 27 February 1943 that "I got so upset and unhappy at home—no maid—the general mess—that my Dr. there said come to N.Y.—have a good time [...] In the hospital I had hysterics and surprised myself to death. It's all part of this age I think—at least for people who take things hard like us" (SSC, NHP, 7.4). Despite seemingly happy circumstances, during the first year of marriage to her third husband, and shortly after the publication of *The Prodigal Women* and the sale of the movie rights, Hale experienced a second breakdown. This one resulted in years of Jungian analysis in the residential facility of Dr. Beatrice Hinkle, a feminist psychotherapist who studied with both Freud and Jung before translating Jung's work into English.

Hale concentrated on her own care with Hinkle's encouragement. Reports from the Fessenden School indicate that the quality of Mark Hardin's schoolwork declined, and William Wertenbaker remained with his grandmother through the years of his mother's confinement. Nancy Hale wrote her mother on 11 September 1944, one year and eight months after leaving Washington to enter Hinkle's care, that the doctor and her husband concurred in their opinion: "I ought not to have the responsibility of Willy for a while, dear as you know that responsibility is to me. They both feel that he had better go to a little boys' boarding school while I get adjusted to being out in the world and living at home with F. again." She closes the letter with the comment, "For everyone's sake I must put myself first" (SSC, NHP, 7.5). Later that same month Hale writes of her younger son, "It is hard to send him off to school so young, but I can't take it on and you musn't any longer than is necessary, and both the Dr. and Fred seem to feel it will do him good, amd [sic] certainly it wouldn't do him good to have me straining to do things for him as I did before" (SSC, NHP, 7.5, 19 Sept. 1944).

Fredson Bowers appeared bent on protecting his wife over all other considerations. He wrote to Lilian Hale on 30 May 1943, that Nancy Hale could not take care of her youngest son for the summer. The greatest problem this caused was the potential that the boy's father might want him, contact which Nancy Hale had attempted continually to prevent. Bowers wrote, "I am taking a very selfish view that almost anything would be better for Nancy than having Willy with her this summer. I was forced to watch helplessly last winter while he wore her down, and even a nurse would not prevent it entirely. Like all children he is utterly selfish, and will tumble over her and everything even though she tells him she is tired or ill, and she cannot refuse him [...] She is worth any amount of waiting for" (SSC, NHP, 100.21, 30 May 1943). Of thirteen-year-old Mark, Bowers wrote, "I think Mark's situation is unfortunate, but I also think he's his

father's child, is happier, with him, and should be allowed to gravitate towards him naturally since he is not really the type who could be influenced by Nancy and what she has to offer he is not interested in" (SSC, NHP, 100.21, 13 Aug. 1943). Correspondence repeatedly addressed the male influence so necessary for a boy. Taylor Hardin voiced concern for the missing male influence when Mark Hardin stayed with Lilian Hale for extended periods in his youth. He wrote when his son was about to turn five, "I hate Mark to be away from masculine influence—my influence—so much" (SSC, HFP, 101.1. Letter from TSH to LWH, 6 Mar. 1935). Taylor Hardin described his goals for his son: "...to keep him from being a spoiled, helpless little sissy and to try to make him more & more manly & more & more able to handle himself & look out for himself" (SSC, HFP, 101.1. TSH to LWH, 29 June 1936). He recognized that his son's situation was difficult, and he wrote to Lilian Hale of his child's upbringing, "It is our duty, hers [Nancy Hale's] and mine, as parents of the boy, to do the best we can by him for his sake and not our own." Hardin wrote also of their split custody of the child as being an effort toward fairness to both parents (SSC, HFP, 101.1, 1 June 1936).

The attempt at equality between the parents led to increasing difficulties for Mark Hardin. A telling letter between grandmothers before Hale's illnesses began, demonstrates the conflict brought by the deterioration of family structure. On 13 May 1937, Rosalie Hardin wrote to Lilian Westcott Hale:

Mark has been so disappointed not hearing from you or his mother as he asked you both where Nancy would be for her birthday May 6<sup>th</sup>. He selected her present & paid for it with his birthday money my sister gave him--& the present is wrapped waiting to mail. I told him I feel Dedham is the place to send as his mother would call him when she passed through here if she did not have time to



come to 1329.<sup>71</sup> But he said, ‘No RoRo, I will wait until she tells me where to send my present’ (SSC, NHP, 100.31).

He had just turned seven years old.

After Nancy Hale had been treated in Connecticut for two years, Bowers schemed to move his wife from Hinkle’s residential facility to Johns Hopkins Hospital in Maryland. Hale felt unable to be moved. The breakdown removed her from her family for more than two and a half years, during which time she did not see her children. Beebe felt that Hale was able to fall apart during this time because she felt protected by Bowers, and that “What she was really doing was expressing all the rage and grief she had experienced with Charles Wertenbaker” (Interview). Maxwell Perkins wrote to Hale on 21 October 1942 about her difficulties in dealing with that relationship:

I think your book is really much bigger and better than even the best reviewers realized. It tells much that never was before revealed. And the business of literature is to reveal life. Not, of course, in just the realistic sense, for it is done by the poets too, and in fact what underlies your writing is a poet. But still, I do know that you can do even better. I know that this book was a very hard book, for specific reasons, and that it was one of those books that a writer must get out and get through with before she can go on. (209-210)

Hale did not go on with her writing or her life until she had suffered an emotional breakdown accompanied by physical problems resulting from complications of a hysterectomy. Martha Banta recognizes that every time period has asked through the ages: “Just who am I? [...] each

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<sup>71</sup> The Hardins’ residence in Washington, D.C. was located at 1329 Connecticut Avenue.

generation has to ask it for different reasons [....] In answering, these heroines were aided or abetted by the degree of confidence they had in imaging what it means to be a woman” (241). The heroine of *The Prodigal Women*, despite her confidence, demonstrates the conflicts of the period. She claims that she conforms to Boston’s rules because, “I don’t want to be criticized” (164). Yet she finally defies social constructs and has an affair with a married man. He calls her, “Cold as ice. A modern woman” (159). Nonetheless, as he embraces her:

Suddenly she was paralyzed with a terror she had not anticipated. She had not expected to feel his arms around her. She had not had time....His hot, hard lips against her mouth, his heavy, hard chest pushing against her: this was something she had never for a moment dreamt of in all her life, a new and undesired panic. This was not being kissed, being held: this was something that attacked self-confidence and power. She felt that in a second she would cease to be her precious integral self. She would melt into some vast, writhing sea of humanity, all women....All that she loved, all herself, was being battered, was tottering” (159).

The battle between male and female was a salient conflict of the modern period. While Lilian Hale demonstrated Victorian acceptance of the world, Nancy Hale’s life and her writings were efforts to maintain control. When the character of Maizie, who ultimately breaks down, discovers she is pregnant by Lambert Rudd, his response to the news is immediate: “...he stared at her vaguely without understanding what she said. Then he started forward in his chair.

““Good God! Why, you poor kid! Well, don’t worry. We’ll do something about it”” (57). Although she is horrified initially by his suggestion, Maizie succumbs to his strong will after their marriage. Hale deals with the emotional topic of abortion with candor. Lambert Rudd

feels manipulated into marriage, but on their subsequent cruise to South America, Maizie attempts to seize control: "He felt she had made him marry her. He would forget that. She would make him happy. She would be indispensable to him [...]. By the time they reached Panama she felt confident and possessive" (61). After an inner battle, Maizie decides to have the abortion which she dreads, because she feels it is what Lambert Rudd wants. It is a way to win him. The procedure is executed without anesthesia, and when Maizie rejoins her husband after, she asks if he loves her now. Unwilling to shoulder any responsibility, the modern male stammers, "I—I didn't ask you to do it. Now, darling, get this straight" (68). Both Nancy Hale and the character she creates self-destruct when they fail to act as individuals, trading their selfhood to participate only as the partner of a dominating husband.

Hale continually opens Maizie's thoughts to the reader. She relates that Maizie "... knew what she wanted—for him to love her as a man should love a woman. It remained for her to find the ways to make him into that kind of man. She did not know them but they must exist, and, she thought, she would find them if it killed her" (69). Maizie attempts to become what she thinks Lambert Rudd desires, but she fails to make a physical recovery from the abortion, and she requires another surgery to save her life. She is told not to have sexual relations with her husband for a month. He goes out alone in the evening and on returning, experiences her usual round of jealous questions. Rudd confesses that he has been with a girl and that he has kissed her, he says, "About five—small—kisses underneath a moon on a nightclub terrace" (77). In response, Maizie compromises her health to provide him with the sexual relations that he claims to require. The relationship with the forceful modern man destroys the Southern girl seeking a traditional marriage. Lambert Rudd reflects, "...how odd it was to find himself a sort of a nurse to a woman, a woman whom he could not enjoy nor find any pleasure with, whom he must guard

and save from exertion; a fine kind of a wife, a fine kind of a man to become..." (80). Maizie's responses to him range from weeping to playing the light and amiable companion, even suggesting other women to satisfy his sexual needs (81). Lambert Rudd demonstrates the macho ruggedness of the new man described by Stansell, the vigorous and masculine character required to squelch the threat posed by the New Woman (31-32).

Leda March, the heroine, demonstrates the strength that Hale often lacks. Leda is critical of others, and she learns from the people who surround her. Hale writes that Leda

...had believed Mrs. Jekyll to be wise and confident, above the touch of fear; she had believed Maizie to be a symbol of loveliness and attraction; now she had seen that neither were those things. They were susceptible to all the diseases of the heart that Leda had suffered. They were not persons whom she envied any more. She was fond of them, but affection and love were not among the prizes she longed to wrest from life.

She wanted power, and control, and order, and proud untouchable beauty.

Her parents loved her, and it had never done her any good. (114)

Leda is the New Woman, willing to do anything to further her own goals. She destroys her marriage to her boring cousin James who reflects many of the traditional values of Taylor Hardin. She ultimately decides to give up her son when James suggests that the arrangement of sharing their son—six months a year with each parent—is unsatisfactory. That decision closes the novel in a psychological rambling during which the heroine recognizes her own true self. She sees that she is battling continually, and in the case of her son, the battle is to make him her own. Leda says to herself, "One kind of power would be mine if I kept him." She repeats that "Power is the key. I always wanted to conquer. I always had to conquer. Is that where power

lies? To keep my child? A full-time job no matter how I do it. Do I want him all the time—for the power?” (554). Leda returns to her parents’ house after the civilized negotiations with James, in which he rationalizes that for the good of their child, one of them must perform full-time parenting duties. James knows that the decision must be left to Leda, and that she will not wish to give up her freedom for her child. Her mother reacts that for Leda to give up her son would be unnatural. Leda responds to her mother with crushing words, ““I can’t give him a normal bringing-up, [...] I never had a normal bringing-up myself”” (555).

The destruction of the solidly knit family unit was a prominent aspect of the modern rejection of Victorian values in Hale’s writing. Kristin Celello describes the alterations to marriage and the family structure which occurred during the twentieth century. The legal unions of the preceding century had been obligatory structures which women protected in their role as domestic guardian. The Victorian marriage relied upon honoring a covenant which might include love (Celello 18), while the increasing expectation for the companionability of the partners brought a rise in the divorce rates of the twentieth century (Celello 24-25). The dissolution of marriages demonstrates another form of the pleasure principle at work as the moderns rejected the concepts of duty and obligation in favor of the new goals of freedom and happiness. Celello notes the social gender control in dissolving marriages, as the legal structure drove women to instigate proceedings by making the easiest method to end the marriage a charge of cruelty by the wife (25).

Increasing divorce rates and the breakdown of the family unit resulted from the modern social code and the new expectations of women. Perhaps because of those effects, mental illness and analysis became popular topics of the period. Although Nancy Hale was an early advocate and beneficiary of psychoanalysis, she did not take advantage of the marriage counseling

services which were an urban innovation of the 1930s. The experts, according to Celello, recognized that marriage was not a game, but an important effort, a union requiring work. Hale's divorces reflect the views and failings of the twentieth century modern period as does her reliance on the new methods inspired by the work of European analysts Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. Hormonal disturbances were a likely contributing cause to Hale's emotional problems. Her first breakdown followed the birth of her second son and may have resulted from postpartum depression. The second occurred after a difficult hysterectomy, which was followed by complications while she was under Hinkle's care. Both lengthy treatment periods were preceded by radical hormone fluctuations for Hale. Long time confidant William Maxwell referred to Hale's "immense obsession with illness" (SSC, NHP, 14.21, undated). Certainly, Nancy Hale suffered from intense sensitivity, which may have made hormonal imbalances particularly disruptive to her emotional stability. She followed the new, modern tendency to seek emotional help, although analyst Beebe points out that it was unusual for a patient to enter a residential Jungian Treatment Center in 1943 as Hale did. Beebe explains that "Today we would see that as fostering a regression" (Interview).

Beebe feels that Hale controlled the timing of her second collapse: "When she was in safe harbor, she could have her breakdown. Fredson accepted it and tolerated it—unflappable" (Interview). Bowers proved his loyalty during the two and a half years without his new wife, a testament to his own stability and his tremendous determination to see the marriage through, as he had promised. Bowers was incomparable as a scholar partially as a result of the same characteristics that he brought to marriage. Lisa Guernsey spoke of him as a legendary figure at the University of Virginia years after his death: "Not everyone loved Mr. Bowers, but nearly everyone admired and respected him" (29). A colleague called him "an academic empire builder

and a man unrelenting in his demands for excellence.” The colleague found Bowers to be “...an emblem of relentless drive and intellectual excellence. Professors’ faces become animated just recalling his influence” (Guernsey 31). Fredson Bowers was a renowned bibliographer, Shakespearian scholar, and textual critic, yet helping his wife overcome her emotional difficulties may have marked the true pinnacle of his determined capabilities.

Hale’s extensive therapy reflected the modern interest in psychology and analysis. In *The Perils of Prosperity, 1914-32*, Leuchtenburg discusses the growth of analysis in America, and the popularity of the teachings of Sigmund Freud. He explains that the psychoanalysts themselves recognized the acceptance of Freud’s theories as a modern demonstration, asserting that, “...the popularity had been achieved less through an understanding of Freud than through a belief that he shared the American conviction that every man had the right not merely to pursue happiness but to possess it” (166). This hedonistic impulse marked a questionable development in American society, as the concentration on egocentric pleasures and the denial of the duties and obligations that were hallmarks of American society became increasingly acceptable. The reticence of the preceding Victorian era made the aggressive impulses of the modern age even more apparent. Mothers like Lilian Westcott Hale watched quietly as their daughters appeared bent on destroying previous standards, focusing their energies on their own pleasures and problems.

Leuchtenburg notes that the writers of the age incorporated Freud’s ideas. Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* included a dream description of a woman dressed in white on a stretcher (185). His 1934 novel, *Tender Is the Night*, explored the world of mental illness through two characters, first doctor and patient, then husband and wife. Hale also demonstrated the new fascination with psychoanalysis in her writing, building a novel around stories of a residential

treatment facility, its patients, and doctor. More than a decade after the end of her intensive therapy with Beatrice Hinkle, Hale published a sequence of stories in *The New Yorker*, which were compiled in 1957 as *Heaven and Hardpan Farm*.

The stories of *Heaven and Hardpan Farm* acknowledge the modern acceptance of mental illness. Nancy Hale called on her extensive years of therapy to paint an often amusing picture of a group of emotionally distraught women under the treatment of a male psychiatrist. The collection of stories was one of Hale's personal favorites, perhaps because it signaled her emergence from the end of a long, dark tunnel. As one patient in *Heaven and Hardpan Farm* says to the doctor, "I hate being neurotic. I hate going round and round and never getting anywhere. I just can't help it" (205). Hale's therapy with Hinkle took place in a country house like the novel's setting. Her life experience which prepared her to write the stories also included an extensive stay at restful ranches in Arizona, following her hospitalization while married to Wertenbaker. Hale wrote to her mother from the Adobe House on 27 January 1940:

...this place has all the symbols you associate with safety—doctors, nurses etc—and none of the tragic sights and sounds you get in a hospital. And second and most important—terribly important I think—there is no pressure of any sort put on me because I am on the whole weller than anyone else here. You see in a normal place I always feel depressed because all around me are people doing more than I have the energy or endurance to do. And it gets me down. [...] people exercise violently & stay up late & keep going & I am given a perpetual sense of inferiority because I can't—Here weakness is taken for granted and nobody expects you to feel like doing much. (SSC, NHP, 7.1)



Hale took her emotional illness seriously, despite the humor of *Heaven and Hardpan Farm*; her years of therapy, so popular during the era, changed her life. Beebe observed about Hale after her therapy years that "...she was fierce about not letting anyone dominate her space. Once I was sitting in a room with her and not saying anything and she said 'John, stop doing what you're doing.' She would not let me dominate her psychic space" (Interview). Hale's self-protective instinct was built up through years of self examination. While her mother and boarding schools cared for her children, Hale maintained her focus on her own emotional needs. In an interview she explained, "...many women haven't realized that so much of their plight is their own doing. They have allowed themselves to be put down. I don't mean that to fight back you have to be disagreeable. Just have your own opinion of yourself and don't think too much of what somebody else thinks" (Friddell, "Spontaneous"). The words are convincing, yet Hale was desperately affected by the opinions of outsiders, causing William Maxwell to advise her not to read critical reviews of her work (SSC, NHP, 14.21). The years of therapy with Hinkle allowed Hale to return to her life, but her struggle never ended. She said to Beebe years after her analysis, "The self is something you have to fight for every day" (Interview). He recalls Hale's extreme sensitivity and her desire to "be herself in a time when that was difficult. She saw that—it's always tied in with gender. A man had a greater chance to step forward" (Interview).

When Nancy Hale was emotionally stronger, she was driven to get ahead like her heroine Leda in *The Prodigal Women*. When she first decided to leave Taylor Hardin in the throes of her romance with Wolcott Gibbs, she wrote of discarding the imperfect. Although she postponed divorce to make one last attempt to save her marriage, Hale's words to her mother revealed again the influence of the era on her life. About the idea of parting from her first husband, she wrote on 29 April 1931, "...I have the most tremendous feeling of relief. The thought of years and

years with some one not entirely [sic] congenial to me, like Taylor, was getting worse and worse, and the feeling that I am now free to make a great thing of my life is a wonderful thought” (SSC, NHP, 6.10).

Hale’s work reflected her internal conflicts; she considered her fiction “a mere imitation of life” (Hale, “What, This Old Thing?” 2). Her work exposed a wide range of important modern issues: race and bias, mental illness, and new freedoms for women. Men, perhaps, thought in new ways in an era which continually challenged the strict social guidelines that had preceded it, but women lived new lives. The comforts of the privileged class, portrayed by writers like Hale, persisted in attracting an audience, and the women inside the trappings of that world were living as they never had before. They had not evolved simply from the world of the previous generation; they had rejected it outright. Felski describes the artist’s role in the Modern Age as “...that of dissident and outsider” (184). Breaking with the Victorian past required a segmenting of society. The art world provided one of the most significant arenas for examining the divisive social changes taking place. Felski comments on the challenge: “Modern art does contain a rich and complex history of experimenting with differing styles and techniques of representation, with questioning everyday realities and imagining alternative worlds. As feminist critics and artists struggle to rethink the meaning of gender, they have found aspects of that history inspiring” (184).

Hale found inspiration in the new freedoms for women, but she recognized the era’s negative impact on family structure. She diverted responsibility for it, however, in a 1961 letter intended to provide additional information to her son’s therapist. She explained that she married Fredson Bowers on a doctor’s advice that she should avoid gossip that was circulating about their affair. Wertenbaker had already sued her for custody based on his claim of Hale’s past

promiscuity and instability. Of the resulting marriage to Bowers, she remarked, "...if I had possessed any objective judgment at the time I would have realized that a man who had had four children whom he was not in the least interested in, was unlikely to prove a good father to a stepchild" (SSC, NHP, 17.1, letter to Dr. C.F. Sulzberger of NYC, 2 July 1961). She described Bowers as a dependable husband who fulfilled the basic requirements of step-fathering, but she also related his comment about children: "It is bad for my intelligence to associate closely with a child." She recalled an incident where Bowers "grilled" her son, "which scared me as it was a repetition of the grilling Wertenbaker put me through to make me confess my 'sins'," recorded painfully in *The Prodigal Women*, with Hector's persistent and demeaning interrogation of Betsy. Although Hale spent years separated from her son during her therapy, she said in retrospect of the time she was with him, that she doted on him too much, and that "...a little more indifference and 'affectionate neglect' would have been better..." (SSC, NHP, 17.1).

Nancy Hale struggled in her life and in her art. Her writing demonstrates the tremendous conflicts a woman encountered in a world with less defined constructs than the controlling system of Victorianism. Her narratives were drawn from her life—memoirs. Eight years after *The Prodigal Women*'s painful recounting of her second marriage, Hale produced another best seller, *The Sign of Jonah*. Once again, she dealt fearlessly with issues which were controversial for the period. Hale opens the novel with a sidestepping note in which she compares a work of fiction to a dream: "That is to say, places, events, and persons often with opinions wildly at variance with those of the writer, occur in some kind of pattern," but, she says, both dreams and fiction, occur outside reality. Her defensive position about the possibility of non-fictional aspects in *The Sign of Jonah* is particularly apparent in the following comment: "...to accuse an author of taking real people, real places, real events and putting them into a book [...] As well

accuse the dreamer of willfully taking real persons, places, and events and putting them into the subjective arrangement of his dream. As well say, ‘How dare you dream of me!’” (Author’s Note).

Her husband’s position on the faculty of the University of Virginia brought the potential for professional damage if Hale published a controversial book. The reason for Hale’s defensive disclaimer becomes apparent in the first few pages as she comments negatively about the South. *The Sign of Jonah* opens with a young New York woman traveling to the South to visit a renegade segment of her northern family. The narrative’s patriarch, Enoch Crocker, is based on Hale’s accumulated tales of her famous and powerful grandfather, Edward Everett Hale. Crocker’s fictional granddaughter, who is a writer, comments in the novel that “A writer must find some beginning on which to build his characters” (225). A resident of the South at the time, Hale attacks the customs and attitudes of the Southerners through the comments of both the detached segment of the northern family and the visiting cousin. She challenges racial hierarchy immediately when, after being introduced to the family’s best worker, a black man, outspoken Sybil comments on his good looks: “I could go for a man that looked like that” (10). The unpleasant silence which follows the comment is provoked more by its overt sexuality than by a breach of traditional Southern racial barriers, for Enoch Crocker dreams of uplifting the downtrodden black society of the South. An early scene captures him teaching the young black children from the area.

The contrary position of this misplaced branch of a northern family in the South reflects Hale’s disdain for Southern ideas. A young Southern neighbor shares his opinion of Enoch Crocker’s granddaughter Hope’s choice of riding horses: “...it don’t seem right for you to ride something a man would have trouble holdin” (48), sending the positive message that this is a

woman of exceptional power. The New York cousin notes that the Southern sisters are "...so unworldly, so strangely Victorian" (49), clearly held behind the times by their life in the primitive South. The young Southern man asks Sybil, "You one of these nigger-lovers like your kin here? They're right famous round here for their nigger-lovin propensities" (49). Enoch Crocker shapes the family's feelings about the surrounding South. He explains his ideas that "the Southerners today are the real slaves. It is a slavery of the intellect. It is a slavery to ignorance, prejudice, bias, superstition—and all made noble under the guise of tradition. They are less free than the Negroes, who carry no such chains" (51).

Enoch lapses into a lengthy diatribe to his young cousin, Sybil, about the wrongs of segregation, concluding, "I hold assimilation to be the only answer to the racial problem. But where is it to begin-The day that a white and a black are married here and have a child without let or hindrance, will be the beginning of a solution." The dead silence after Sybil's earlier comment about Gordon's good looks is inspired, as was noted, not by the racial implications, but by the overt sexuality of the young woman's words, particularly as Enoch says privately, "Since it was the first time she had ever seen the man" (14). Enoch Crocker's solution to the racial problem was shocking for 1950 when the book was published.

Hale examined her own feelings about the South and the North through this misplaced family. The racial theme was not a new one for Hale, and it voiced another topic of concern for modern writers. Her New England background and the liberal ideas of New York City conflicted sharply with what Hale found in the South. *The Sign of Jonah* approached the problem with Hale's usual candor. She criticized the provincial opinions of the white Southerners, as they in turn judged the group that they deemed inferior. Hale propelled the modern interest in ethnicity to a more challenging arena as the willful, white, and single Hope

becomes pregnant, and the audience perceives that the handsome black worker Gordon might be the father. She first begs her sister to go with her to obtain an abortion. When Felicity rejects the idea, Hope protects herself in the traditional manner, through a hasty marriage. Again, as in *The Prodigal Women*, Hale's strong heroine has no use for a child, and she gives him away to be cared for, alternately by her sister and by her cousin, Sybil. The family's social ideals, instilled by Enoch Crocker, are quickly abandoned as they become the center of a social whirl on traveling to New York to visit Sybil while the aging patriarch remains at home. The significant impact of urbanization on modern life destroys the previously close-knit family, as the members become focused on social position. Gender continues as a primary topic, and, in her power struggles with the men in her life, Hope is perhaps more destructive in her self-centered approach than Leda had been in *The Prodigal Women*. This forceful female is repeatedly compared to a male in the novel: "What a man Hope would have made! One saw her conquering the world" (79). Leda also demonstrated a conquering spirit, but now Hale determines that such a personality is clearly male in orientation. Hope is as calculating as a chess master. She plans her moves deftly, for in her mind, life is "a game of war" (82). She is unable to relate to women; "...she felt nothing in common with them. She didn't, actually, feel that she was what is called 'a woman.' A thousand voices of memory passed through her mind, saying 'Hope has a man's mind.' Of course that was the reason. Physically she was more feminine than any of them" (244). In *The Sign of Jonah* Hale extended her exploration of previously forbidden territories. Sybil, whose life is complicated by her abuse of alcohol, pursues her last option in her great affection for Hope's brother. They travel to an inn to consummate their relationship, and she discovers the truth which dashes her dreams: "What Sybil went through, while she heard Edward throwing up in the bathroom, was unspeakable. It was a plunging back through all her

horror, all her self-loathing, all her despair” (173-174). Sybil recognizes that a relationship is impossible, since Edward is homosexual.

Later in the novel Hale explores other modern themes through the character Sybil. Newly dried-out and analyzed, according to the climate of the times, Sybil spins a web of comparisons between Jung and Freud: “The child is a symbol of the growing self, Jung. Of the neurosis, Freud” (377). Hale dedicated this novel to her psychoanalyst, Beatrice Hinkle, whose Jungian analysis changed her life. Despite her careful disclaimer at the beginning of the novel that the work is fictional, every page of *The Sign of Jonah* is tied to Hale and demonstrates the modern rejection of Victorian values. From Hope’s Reno divorce (252) to her pink wedding gown (99), the novel links continually to Hale’s life.

An obvious example of the mix of life and art appears in Hope’s opinion on childrearing which mimics the words of Bowers. Hope says, “For any ordinary adult it is only a terrible waste of one’s life to associate with an inferior intellect. The result could be only to bring one’s own mind down to the level of the child’s, get one to thinking as the child thinks” (117). The examples occur frequently. In *The Sign of Jonah*, a photograph of the Crocker family newly arrived in New York City, recalls the professional photograph of Nancy Hale with her oldest son (figure 81). Hale describes the fictional image as “a full-page photograph of the sisters and Edward in *Vogue*. Background, silver lame with a few floating silver balloons” (106). In New York, Hope’s magazine job recalls Hale’s own time at *Vogue*. Hope “...never went to the office until ten [because she] went to all the very parties the magazine was concerned with, a great asset, and therefore could not be expected to get up as early as the rest of them...” (179). The autobiographical element in Hale’s fiction lends a disconcerting quality to some of the issues she includes. She writes that when Hope’s baby was presented to her, “The first thing Hope said

was, 'Let me see it.' It was a boy. He was tiny and perfect and a clear translucent red all over. Hope looked at him hard. 'Darling,' Harry said, looking down at them. 'Here,' Hope said, handing the baby to the nurse. After that first inspection she really hardly looked at him" (102). She examines the child's coloring, and the audience waits to learn if the results will incriminate. Finding him unthreatening, Hope loses interest entirely. The audience must wonder if Hale experienced such lack of maternal feelings in light of her tendency to reveal her own life in her work.

Hale eschewed the Victorian traditions which upheld marriage, motherhood, and family. Elizabeth Allen points out in *A Woman's Place in the Novels of Henry James* that traditional Victorian mores viewed women as "essentially in 'relation' to others, [...] as a woman before she is an individual. If woman's national function was that of upholding morality and virtue, then her personal way of fulfilling it was in relation to those around her, and most naturally in the role of wife and mother" (15). Modernist thinking shunned prior ideas, and as Leuchtenburg explains, it involved a tremendous consequential shift in morals: "It greatly extended the range of choice [...] Yet, at the same time, it raised baffling problems of the relations between husband and wife, parent and child" (176) with no guidelines for how to deal with the new issues it prompted. The rejection of the values which had been in place for centuries was particularly difficult, he points out, because the young group of artists and writers who swarmed to New York, the new center for independent thought, possessed Puritan roots so deep that they were unable to abandon themselves to the hedonism of the era without extreme impulses of guilt (177). Leuchtenburg states that "The disintegration of traditional American values—so sharply recorded by novelists and artists—was reflected in a change in manners and morals that shook American society to its depths" (158). The rise of the city also played an important role in the



deterioration of the family, according to Leuchtenburg, and New York City was the center for modern thinking.

Nancy Hale's New England conservative childhood was disrupted by the Modern era. She described the collision of periods in images filtered through her fine-tuned perception. She wrote of her mother's complaint that "'People seem to me to use their eyes only to keep from tripping over things'" and of the response it evoked in her: "I used to fear she meant mostly me, a non-painter, and was too polite to say so. But now I saw that other people were as non-visual, or more so. At least I could visualize in words" (SSC, NHP, 38.31, Essay called "Describing"). Hale provided a record of women's struggles in modern New York City. The female's perspective on the great shift in ideology would be only speculation without works like Nancy Hale's.

#### Part 4: CONCLUSION: Recalling the Transition from Victorian to Modern

Lilian Westcott Hale and Nancy Hale committed themselves to their art. Despite a close mother-daughter relationship, their outlooks diverged sharply as a result of their having come of age in different eras. Lilian Westcott Hale, to secure social approval, followed the cultural standards that she learned in her youth. A career, however, was not a recognized option for a Victorian woman. In her subtle, quiet manner she went beyond the expectations for women, yet she may not have received as much attention as the more outspoken women artists of the period, particularly from feminist critics. Aronson's comments about the critical recognition that Vonnoh received for her sculpture, apply once again to Lilian Hale as well:

Although feminist art historians have reinstated many women artists to the canon, Vonnoh has garnered relatively little attention from them. It is perhaps because her lifestyle was rather conventional and her approach academic. One could argue that gender discrimination, while unquestionably affecting Vonnoh's career and professional decisions, did not prevent her from meeting her potential. She embraced subjects that were perceived as appropriate to women artists, and her work enjoyed broad appeal and critical accolades. Nevertheless, it is worth considering how Vonnoh effectively worked the system in order to succeed. (3-4)

Lilian Hale worked the same system, creating art that was not only acceptable for the period, but that was also in demand in Boston. Still-lives were considered appropriate for women artists, and Hale's were individualized by her own innovations in technique and composition. Her paintings and drawings of the popular idealized women demonstrate her effort to attain professional

respect, as do her portraits of children. She forged her own style within these established genres, earning success by working within the ideological system, as well as by developing her skillful technique. Both Vonnoh and Hale failed to make the transition to the modern trends in art which appeared later in their careers. They shared a disdain for the art styles replacing the traditional approach that they followed. The exploitation of new techniques which marked the twentieth century's art expressed the general rejection of traditional methods and subject matter. Aronson says that Vonnoh's "sculpture was unappreciated by advocates of modernism, taking an inevitable toll on her reputation" (221). Vonnoh's interest in her sculpting began to diminish, because "...she knew enthusiasm for her work was flagging and was discouraged by the evolution in preferences" (Vonnoh 216). The change in artistic taste was so pronounced that museum collections sold Vonnoh's sculptures during the 1940s and 1950s (Aronson 216).

Both Philip and Lilian Hale rejected many of the art trends which shifted the audience's support away from their own work as it had from Vonnoh's sculpture. Nancy Hale wrote about her parent's strong feelings:

Years before, my father had been fond of declaring that modernists—meaning painters since Cezanne—were in effect saying, "Let me look into the interior of my belly."

That attitude in modern painting was what profoundly distressed her [Lilian Hale]. It was not at all that modern pictures were abstractions. "Every good painting is basically an abstraction," my father used to say. Or that they were not representational. Her dismay was different from the layman's dismay. What depressed her was the loss of that rapturous meeting between the artist's

private vision and the shimmering world of objects. To her it amounted to a loss of soul. ("Eyes and No Eyes" 57)

The requests for Lilian Hale's work declined in the years before her death in 1963. She continued to produce portraits, but her 1955 move to Virginia was marked by diminished demand for her work despite a reduction in her rate.<sup>72</sup> Nancy Hale saw the decline as a shift away from the desire for beauty, which Lilian Hale had pursued throughout her career, to the art world's demand for the more earthy depictions of the reality of life.

The cultural transition from Victorian to modern, however, worked in favor of many women artists. Career women like Nancy Hale were a product of the changes advanced by the modern rejection of Victorian ideology. Increasingly, women worked alongside men, but history often acknowledged only the male accomplishments. Women who distinguished themselves in non-domestic endeavors during the first half of the twentieth century as both of these Hale women did, frequently were denied the same recognition for their efforts as male artists. Feminist art historians have attempted for the past forty years to record the accomplishments of women whose social, academic, and cultural contributions have been overlooked. The feminist perspective acknowledges the significance of cultural influences to the artist, in particular the gender constructs of the surrounding society. The work produced also perpetuates the ideals of the artist. Lilian Westcott Hale and Nancy Hale form a particularly intriguing pair for analysis, a mother and a daughter of exceptional talent in different media, their lives connected yet exceedingly disparate. Beyond the biographical statement of their achievements, lies the

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<sup>72</sup> In "Eyes and No Eyes, or, The Art of Seeing," Nancy Hale writes of a reduction when her mother moved to the South to less than a third of her former rate, yet Lilian Hale continued to struggle for commissions.

recognition of their art as a cultural reflection of their periods, demonstrating what it was to be a woman during the difficult transition from the Victorian to the modern era.

Lilian Hale, maintaining traditional views, created subtle visual statements about woman's position; her modern daughter, Nancy Hale, confronted the changing situation of the New Woman through her writing. The gender constructs affecting them changed with the times, but the social structures in place continually exercised significant control over the artists and their messages. Lilian Hale's letters to her daughter indicate her acceptance of her daughter's decisions, however foreign to her upbringing. She encouraged Nancy Hale through divorces and breakdowns, and she interrupted her own work to care for her grandchildren for months and even years at a time while her daughter took care of her own emotional needs. Lilian Hale did not agree with all of her daughter's decisions, and she chose not to have *The Prodigal Women* dedicated to her, but her support was unwavering. The art of the mother and her daughter demonstrated the struggle women encountered in a changing world; their work provides a culturally revealing interpretation of a social period. Nancy Hale describes the insights artwork provides into the artist. In a story called "The Other Side," Hale describes an exhibition of John Singer Sargent's paintings at which a doctor, gazing at a painting of a former patient, comments, "'Now I can see what was the matter with him'" (82). The doctor's newly acquired understanding results from his position in the audience receiving the painting.

The doctor gains understanding of his patient's illness by looking at an artistic image; Nancy Hale finds her mother's work equally revealing of her being. Hale writes: "The unconscious revelation about herself that I began to take in as I viewed my mother's drawings right after her death seemed almost as eerie, and had to do with the choice of subjects—those little girls, like flowers; those interiors, snug, sheltering, unpeopled; and everywhere those

repeatedly pictured, exquisite falls of snow. It was all true especially the snow” (“The Other Side” 82). Lilian Westcott Hale’s art revealed her life in stark, lonely trees glimpsed from a sheltered world, in coy young women, and in distinctly gendered images of children. Nancy Hale’s world was displayed in bolder terms, confirming the modern climate of directness and of excess. Hers was the world of career women, often demonstrating more concern for themselves than for their children, and Hale also focused her attention on the social elite who isolate themselves through their formal manners and luxuries. Hale wrote of turn-of-the-century New England, vibrant New York, and the time-worn, traditional South. She questioned motherhood, family, and excessive morality. She challenged life through her writing, overwhelmed at times by freedoms and choices, by propriety tossed aside with no ethical replacements.

The two Hale women described different eras with their art, and W. J. T. Mitchell speaks of another important variant in analyzing the work of a writer and an artist: “There are deep and fundamental differences between the verbal and visual arts. But there are also inescapable zones of transaction between them...” (*What Do Pictures Want?* 55). Both the visual art of Lilian Westcott Hale and the texts of her daughter, Nancy Hale, revealed worlds heavily influenced by codes of social behavior. Mitchell comments that a picture “...is a very peculiar and paradoxical creature, both concrete and abstract, both a specific individual thing and a symbolic form that embraces a totality. To get the picture is to get a comprehensive, global view of a situation, yet it is also to take a snapshot at a specific moment” (*What Do Pictures Want?* xvii). The two sets of images presented by Lilian and Nancy Hale created pictures that told the stories of their periods.

Their artworks and the texts frequently accomplish the goal described by W. J. T. Mitchell: to hold the viewer spellbound, a captive audience. The art so moves the viewer that he is frozen; the art, in effect, reverses positions with the audience which is paralyzed with awe for

the work. Mitchell calls this desired end “the Medusa effect” (*What Do Pictures Want?* 36). At this point the three-way interplay between artist, artwork, and audience is apparent. Interpreting the body of Hale work, visual and textual, challenges the audience to consider the beauty, but also the country of origin, the historical time period in which it was created, the psychology of the artist and her period, along with other socio-cultural considerations. The work of art in its relationship to peripherally contributing disciplines forms its message.

Examination of the efforts of Lilian and Nancy Hale is justified based upon their artistic merit as measured by the accolades the two women received during their lifetimes, without consideration for the cultural elements such analysis reveals. Both women were respected in their fields for art which was individual, yet widely appealing. Although critics expressed uniform respect for the artwork of Lilian Westcott Hale whose self portrait appears in figure 87, Bernice Leader compiles a list of seven Boston women artists, including Hale, who have received less than the recognition they are due. She says that they “...were all women painters who painted subjects similar to those of Tarbell, Benson, and Paxton. Their reputations today, however, are even more obscure than those of their male Boston colleagues” (127). Similarly, the literary extension of the modern movement remembers significant males. F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway were the most recognized spokesmen for a questioning generation of young artists. Gertrude Stein referred to Hemingway’s literary group in Paris as “the lost generation.” The women, however, were the truly “lost” element, gone from the pages of history, and it is necessary to revive their work for a fuller understanding of what their lives were like during a tumultuous period in America.

The Hale women are remembered here for their individual accomplishments and for what they contribute to the understanding of their time periods. Ives Gammell said that when Lilian

Westcott Hale worked with William Merritt Chase, the "...celebrated teacher's infectiously meretricious emphasis on dexterous brushwork and ready-made tonalities left no detectable imprint on Mrs. Hale's later work," which was unusual for Chase's students ("Appreciation" Manuscript 11). Neither does she mimic Tarbell or her husband.<sup>73</sup> Gammell claims Hale "...establishes that interplay between perceptively rendered visual experience and expressive abstract design which is the universal hallmark of fine painting. The two components do, in fact, constitute the twin pillars which sustain Western representational painting" ("Appreciation" 13). Her portraits of children, he feels, possess an individuality of features which surpasses the work of Van Dyck and Reynolds, and her use of charcoal as a medium is completely her own, "communicating the most sophisticated visual impressions with unparalleled finesse" ("Appreciation" 15).

Diane E. Kelleher recognizes Lilian Hale's charcoals as particularly deserving of praise: "Undoubtedly, the most remarkable factor uniting all of Hale's works is her unique style. Her subjects emerge through a series of barely perceptible vertical strokes made from sharpened charcoal applied at arm's length. [...] It was this sharpening process, Hale's own innovation, which allowed for the extreme delicacy of line..." (10). Kelleher's comments appear in a mimeographed exhibition catalogue for a show of forty one works on paper at the Boston Athenaeum. William A. Coles acknowledges in the same catalogue that it is a mystery where she found her technique (4); it is her own, unique. His praise is as effusive in introducing the show of her works in 1981 as Gammell's had been, saying that the drawings "are long overdue for the kind of attention and reassessment this occasion should provide" (4). He compares her

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<sup>73</sup> Gammell calls the lack of visible influences from her husband, "fortunate" ("Appreciation" manuscript 12).



winter landscapes to the Dutch Little Masters or Chardin: “They seem so much a part of New England in their feeling, yet they also reveal the quiet lyricism of the interior world of a woman” (5). Coles takes offense at both the fact that Hale’s work has not been more thoroughly covered and at the condescending attitude used when it has been discussed. He is indignant that the word *genteel* is so frequently used to describe her art: “Could one imagine a serious critic applying it to the work of Vermeer, de Hooch, or Chardin?” (5). He cites a lofty list; one in which he clearly feels Lilian Hale belongs. He describes Lilian Hale’s work as “incomparable” (Coles 4). Her technique is individual, yet academically conservative, and her consistent sales during her lifetime indicate the level of acceptance that she entertained.

Hale exhibited widely, and her awards included a bronze medal in the Buenos Aires International Exhibition, a gold medal in painting and a medal of honor in drawing from the Panama-Pacific Exposition of 1915, the Beck Prize in 1923 from the Pennsylvania Academy, the Shaw Prize in 1924 from the National Academy, and the Altman Prize in 1927 from the National Academy, the first one awarded to a woman (Hirshler, “Artists’ Biographies” 210). Perhaps most telling of the changes occurring in the art world was Lilian Hale’s recognition by the august National Academy of Design which Gail Levin describes in “The Changing Status of American Women Artists, 1900-1930:” “This ultra-conservative institution did not permit women to attend anatomy lectures until 1914 and from 1825 to 1953 offered membership and associate membership to only seventy-five women in a total membership of 1,300” (13). Erica Hirshler describes in a footnote that only twenty-eight women were elected academicians. Philip Hale became an associate in 1907 and Lilian Hale in 1927. She became an academician four years later in the year of her husband’s death; he had never been awarded that status (“Lilian Westcott Hale” 5).

Despite such critical acknowledgement, Nancy Hale writes that her mother's career faded during her lifetime:

Although there always remained a demand for my mother's portraits—"When a woman wants a portrait of her children, she wants it to look like them," she would comment grimly—her work went out of style within her own lifetime. No longer was she invited to show at all the big exhibitions over the country. She did still show at some, and she did still win an occasional prize; but she, who had once sold every picture out of her exhibitions before they officially opened, now experienced that pendulum swing of fashion which, in the art of painting, is perhaps more extreme than in any other. ("Eyes and No Eyes")

Lilian Westcott Hale painted Nancy Hale once again after her daughter's life had stabilized emotionally in 1946 (figure 88). Nancy Hale experienced the same high level of recognition and respect during her peak years as her mother had, only to fade from her audience's memory in the twenty years since her death in 1988. She was heavily published for a half century.<sup>74</sup> Sarton described one Hale story as Chekhovian in a 29 July 1954, letter to *New Yorker* editor Katharine White. She asked the question about the story, "...could it also be a masterpiece..." (SSC, NHP, 14.22)? William Maxwell wrote to Hale encouraging a continuation of her connection with the country's leading literary publication: "I doubt [...] that the *New Yorker* exerts or could exert any real influence on you, and know for a fact that your stories have helped to set the tone and pattern of *New Yorker* fiction, but there oughtn't to be any pressure hanging over you, and we all hope that you will let us see the stories first if only

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<sup>74</sup> For a list of Nancy Hale's published works, see the Nancy Hale Bibliography, accompanying this dissertation.

because we love having you in the magazine” (SSC, NHP, 14.21, 29 June 1945). Her more than eighty stories in *The New Yorker*, along with her ten O.Henry Awards (the same number as John Cheever), attest to the quality of her fiction. In a letter to Lilian Westcott Hale in the summer of 1941, Nancy Hale comments that William Maxwell “... says that the story I had in *The New Yorker* years ago called “Midsummer” and which is reprinted in *The New Yorker* collection that the Book of the Month Club is issuing as its July-August book dividend [...] still is always spoken of in *The New Yorker* office as being the best story they ever published” (SSC, NHP, 7.2, 11 June 1941).

In a tribute to Nancy Hale after her death, William Maxwell reflected on her use of senses in description. Her childhood exposure to art played a continual role in her writing. Maxwell used “Midsummer” for an example:

The child of painters, Nancy Hale was brought up in a world where it was inconceivable that beauty of one kind or another would not be an essential part of her art. Her writing reflects this assumption. Her descriptive powers are remarkable but seldom used in the service of the merely visual. For example: “The sound of the horses’ feet was like a confused heartbeat on the swampy ground. They both felt it. They used to get off their horses, without having said a word, and helplessly submerge themselves in each other’s arms, while the sweat ran down their backs under their shirts.” Writing like that doesn’t age. (“Tribute” 226-227)

Maxwell, known as a tough editor, considered Hale’s writing “flawless” in technique and revealing in its subject material, which he called “the bedrock of human experience” (“Tribute 227). It provided the experiences of the emerging career woman who assumed the place vacated

by Victorian womanhood. Hale's work was culturally and artistically significant; her recognition faded nonetheless. William Maxwell wrote that "...it must have seemed to her that her work, in later years, had gone largely unappreciated. At the moment Willa Cather isn't read as much as she once was. One can depend on time to correct myopia of this kind" ("Tribute" 227). The works of Nancy Hale provide material of particular interest to feminists intent upon reviving forgotten women artists, for as Freeman says, Hale addresses "...the age-old problem of being a woman—of trying to establish a separate identity and if possible acquire a modicum of power, yet still fulfill that vague, transcendent, biological pull into motherhood and its ensuing complications. It is the problem the New Feminists would be analyzing endlessly some thirty years after *The Prodigal Women* came out" (Freeman, "Nancy Hale" 214).

The works of this mother and daughter bridge two media forms of expression to provide a social chronicle of womanhood in restrictive and turbulent times. Victoria de Grazia says, "We have to refute the lies that there were no women artists, or that the women artists who are admitted are second-rate and that the reason for their indifference lies in the all-pervasive submission to an indelible femininity—always proposed as unquestionably a disability in making art" (55). The life which takes form in paint or print in the Hales' capable hands is a woman's story told by women, with nuances that provide a distinctly female impression. Nancy Hale's stories held a broad appeal during her era. Her stories of childhood still evoke poignant memories. When Hale writes about a lost object, she shares the feelings of all children who have lost something special. She expresses this idea in the Introduction to *A New England Girlhood*: "Things did get lost; and that I was not the only child to lose and mourn something indefinably precious was demonstrated to me by such letters as the one from a man in Canada, who said, 'I too lost something, when I was six—the little pearl-handled knife my father had given me. I

know how you felt about losing your ring, and I know you are only calling it a ring” (xvi).

Hale’s sensitive touch with memoir allows the audience to merge their lives with her writing.

Maxwell Perkins confirmed the consistent need for that audience when he thanked Hale for giving him the sales figures with *The Prodigal Women* to justify her work to the literary world. The demands and expectations of the audience change with the world that shapes them. Consideration for the audience and for the continual shifts in its perception over time, are illustrated by the changing jackets from different printings of *The Prodigal Women*. The first Avon Press printing in 1965 (figure 89) is illustrated with a seductive drawing of a temptress. She wears a 1960s cocktail dress rather than clothing from the 1930s when the novel’s action occurs. Bold type proclaims: “Nancy Hale’s famous novel of too much money, too much sex, too little love.” The goal of the book cover was to maintain the high, early sale levels for the novel. In addition to the controversial nature of a book which discusses premarital sex, extramarital sex, and abortion, from a woman’s point of view, the cover clearly heightens the notion that the novel is sexually provocative. The cover does include mention of Hale’s literary expertise: “The sweep and grandeur of a Thomas Wolfe...will shock some and astound others,” comments the *Boston Herald*.

The third Avon printing in 1968 (figure 90) uses the same textual description on the cover which again pictures a woman, this time in the arms of a man to whom she willingly yields. A comment from the *New York Herald Tribune* calls it “a book about cruelty and viciousness, a fervently, brilliantly written story.” Both of the back jackets contain the comment that this is “a novel about the secret life of Rich, Well-born Women.” Sales were high for *The Prodigal Women*, vindicating Maxwell Perkins’s loyalty and stating for a later audience that Nancy Hale’s book proved that the public was finally ready, in 1942, to openly discuss female

sexuality. The paperbacks make three predominant claims: the novel involves sexuality openly; it deals with the privileged women of the upper class; it is well written despite content which was steamy by era standards.

Two later jackets demonstrate the shift in interpretation of content for an evolving audience. The sixth printing by Avon adopts iconic images for the cover art. The formal attire of the two couples is a clear demonstration of the social class of the characters (figure 91). The women's headdresses are from the flapper era, now long past, as is the long-stemmed cigarette holder. The use of the ancient statue is incongruous, hinting perhaps at a historical nature to the text and possibly the issue of sexuality. The flap copy shifts significantly to "The lives, loves, and secrets of three society beauties," deleting notably the mention of "too much sex." Perhaps it is no longer of significance to this more advanced world. The jacket might have graced *The Great Gatsby*, and it signals that the topic of sex is no longer the strongest stimulus for sales.

A final cover used for a reissue of *The Prodigal Women* in 1988, the year of Hale's death, brings the work into the perspective of literary artifact (figure 92). The artwork is a stylized painting by New York illustrator and fantasy artist Kinuko Y. Craft. It expresses the social position of the couple through costume which includes a fur stole draped around the woman. The eroticism of earlier covers has been replaced by the disconnected gazes of the man and woman. No ad copy hypes the thick paperback. The front cover merely informs the audience that this is a Plume American Women Writers publication with an introduction by the author Mary Lee Settle. That introduction broadens the new perspective that the cover advances: it is a work of period literature. Settle refers to the novel as a "forever young" writing, "...one in which we find our timeless selves, our hopes, our fears, our neighbors, never-ending, never-changing sorrow and joy and pride." She mentions Anna Karenina and Emma Bovary as iconic

female heroines, connecting them to Hale's characters: "all of us have known, identified with, and still recognize vestiges of the three principal women in *The Prodigal Women*" (vii). She interprets the work as a chronicle of its time period, revealing, she claims, more than a research document: "It is a view that can be found nowhere outside of good fiction, neither in the certainties of history nor in the lesser novels by contemporary writers who did not use their senses to record their surroundings" (vii). It is a documentary of an era, a feminist novel which predates heavy use of the term. Says Settle, "Nancy Hale's women are more alive, stronger, both more sympathetic and more destructive than her men" (viii). She continues, "Hale's work lacks the overt self-consciousness of later feminist writings as its women struggle for power and for their own inner selves" (xiv). Unfortunately, Settle's concluding call for a renewal of interest in all of the works of Nancy Hale with their "understanding of the past" (xiv) has not occurred, just as the artworks of Lilian Westcott Hale, although technically proficient and filled with their own messages of an era, are likewise shrouded by time. The vision of the Hale artists was clear to others during their eras. Ellen Day Hale wrote to Lilian Westcott before their first meeting, that she felt she already knew Westcott because the artworks she had seen by her future sister-in-law gave so clear an indication of her being (SSC, HFP, 77.10, 2 April 1902). The works of Lilian Westcott Hale and Nancy Hale relate impressions from their individual lives, as well as the difficulties inherent in being a woman during the early twentieth century.

Lilian Westcott Hale fought for recognition during her lifetime, surviving in a man's art world by working within the social framework, and benefitting from the support provided by parents, husband, and fellow women in pursuing her art. Nancy Hale lashed out at the structures confining women, and in the end, may have felt that she had failed on a certain level. There were conflicts in her life that were never resolved. In a letter from her son to Hale on *New*

*Yorker* letterhead, dated 25 June 1987, he says, “Fred’s threat, in September 1946, that I would be sent away again if I became the subject of any concern for you, was the finishing touch” (SSC, NHP, 9.8). He had already expressed to her the misery of his childhood, before relating the conversation which took place when he was eight. The losses of Nancy Hale’s life were the result of the era as much as any personal failing. She worked hard, struggled for stability and to write, attempting always to resolve the clash between her conservative childhood and the changing world.

To look at the art of Lilian Westcott Hale and Nancy Hale retrospectively is to find the women in their worlds. The art presents a creation, an image, a fabrication, just as a person prepares himself to meet a curious world. Sarton said of Lilian Westcott Hale, “...in her rare, remote, elusive person, beautiful but slightly daunting, we are taken into the life of art. Anything that was not painting seemed to Lillian [sic] Hale ‘not serious.’ Her sense of personal style, the way she composed her life or a hat or a dress, all came from a private vision of who she meant to be...” (Sarton 7).

Before Nancy Hale wrote of the transforming personal effects of modernism, Henry James “recognize[d] that a strong and confident sense of self cannot be developed if an individual understands that neither she, because she is a woman, nor her values, because they do not lead to monetary gain, are prized by her environment” (Fowler 61). He acknowledged the socially crippling condition of a woman’s place in the late nineteenth century. Lilian Westcott Hale revealed the world of the Victorian woman, and Nancy Hale demonstrated the upheaval of a woman breaking with Victorian structures in favor of freedoms that she was often ill-prepared to handle. The patriarchal attitudes that long dominated the art world allowed the cultural aspects of their work to be overlooked. The work of Lilian Westcott Hale and Nancy Hale



represented and challenged their times, and it reflected the need for change, as each struggled in her own way, and in her own era, to survive and to create.

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